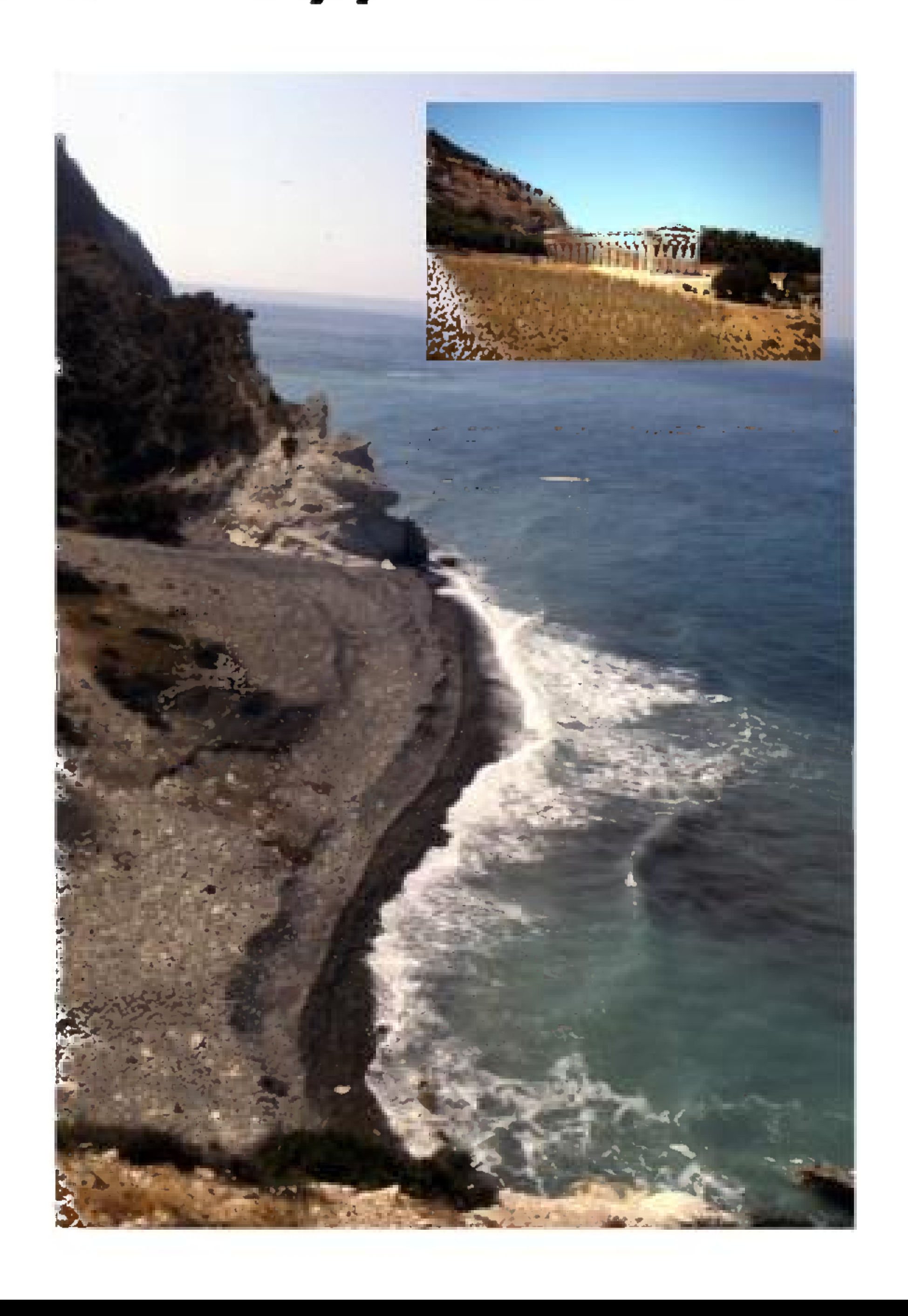
Island Jewels

Understanding Ancient Cyprus and Crete



Island Jewels

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About the Biblical Archaeology Society

The excitement of archaeology and the latest in Bible scholarship since 1974

The Biblical Archaeology Society (BAS) was founded in 1974 as a nonprofit, nondenominational, educational organization dedicated to the dissemination of information about archaeology in the Bible lands.

BAS educates the public about archaeology and the Bible through its bi-monthly magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*, an award-winning web site www.biblicalarchaeology.org, and books and multimedia products (DVDs, CD-ROMs and videos). It also sponsors a wide variety of seminars, tours and cruises that bring leading scholars to general audiences.

The articles in this collection were originally assembled as a service to participants in our Fall 2008 BAS tour to Cyprus and Crete. We feel, however, that this material will also be of great interest to others who are planning to visit those islands and also to those who want to learn more about these fascinating ancient lands.

Publishing Excellence

BAS's flagship publication is *Biblical Archaeology Review* (**BAR**). **BAR** is the only magazine that connects the academic study of archaeology to a broad general audience eager to understand the world of the Bible. Covering both the Old and New Testaments, **BAR** presents the latest discoveries and controversies in archaeology with breathtaking photography and informative maps and diagrams. **BAR**'s writers are the top scholars, the leading researchers, the world renowned experts. **BAR** is the only nonsectarian forum for the discussion of Biblical archaeology.

BAS produced two other publications, *Bible Review* from 1985–2005, and *Archaeology Odyssey* from 1998–2006. The complete editorial contents of all three magazines are available online in the BAS Archive, www.basarchive.org. The BAS Archive also contains the text of five highly-acclaimed books, *Ancient Israel*, *Aspects of Monotheism*, *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, *The Rise of Ancient Israel* and *The Search for Jesus*. The BAS Archive is available through various colleges, universities, churches and other institutions. Individual users may access the same extensive body of materials in the BAS Library, www.biblicalarchaeology.org/library.

Widespread Acclaim

The society, its magazine, and its founder and editor Hershel Shanks have been the subject of widespread acclaim and media attention in publications as diverse as *Time*, *People*, *Civilization*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Jerusalem Post*. BAS has also been featured on television programs aired by CNN, PBS and the Discovery Channel. To learn more about the Biblical Archaeology Society and subscribe to *Biblical Archaeology Review*, go to www.biblicalarchaeology.org.

The articles in this collection originally appeared in Archaeology Odyssey *and* Biblical Archaeology Review*.*

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INTRODUCTION

Island Jewels

Understanding Ancient Cyprus and Crete

Steven Feldman

In the fall of 2008, the Biblical Archaeology Society's Travel/Study department sponsored a two-week tour of Cyprus and Crete led by Professor Daniel Schowalter of Carthage College. To give our tour participants some background on the history of these two ancient lands, we pulled together a packet of articles from *Archaeology Odyssey* and *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazines. As a service to others who may be traveling to Cyprus or Crete—and to those who simply wish to know more about the history of these two fascinating islands—we are pleased to provide the articles in the form of this e-book.

Cyprus and Crete are the third and fourth largest islands in the Mediterranean, following Sicily and Sardinia. In the mid-second millennium B.C., Cyprus lay at the center of a vigorous eastern Mediterranean trade in metals, particularly the copper and tin used to make bronze. Texts from Syria and Egypt refer to the Biblical land of "Alashiya"—thought by most, but not all, scholars to refer to Cyprus—in connection with copper. An 11th-century B.C. account by an Egyptian priest named Wen-Amon describes how he sought refuge on Alashiya after surviving a shipwreck while attempting to return to Egypt from Byblos, in modern-day Lebanon. His account seems to confirm the identification of Alashiya with Cyprus.

Thanks to its natural resources, especially its copper mines, forests and salt lakes, Cyprus was able to build a number of significant harbor cities around its coast. As a result, Cyprus enjoyed a thriving trade with surrounding areas, and much Cypriot pottery has been recovered at Middle and Late Bronze Age sites along the coast of Canaan and further north into Ugarit, and inland sites such as Megiddo, Egypt and Anatolia (modern Turkey).

In about 1375 B.C. Mycenaean settlers arrived in Cyprus; some of them, perhaps the Sea Peoples, moved on to settle the Canaanite coast. By 850 B.C., the migration pattern

was reversed, with Phoenicians arriving on the island from what is today Lebanon, notably Tyre and Sidon.

Crete, for its part, was home to the great Minoan civilization for about two-and-a-half centuries (from 1700 to 1450 B.C.). Minoan culture became well known thanks to the excavations of Sir Arthur Evans, who uncovered the city of Knossos, home of the legendary King Minos. Knossos was also the reputed site of the labyrinth built to contain the part-man, part-bull Minotaur.

Evans also found tablets written in languages called Linear A and Linear B; the latter was deciphered by Michael Ventris, who showed it to be an early form of Greek. Minoan civilization came to an end with the arrival of the Mycenaeans and especially with the massive eruption of the Thera volcano on the island of Santorini.

Our armchair tour of Cyprus and Crete begins with David Soren's "Death at Kourion," a history of an important Cypriot site that was destroyed by an earthquake. Soren recounts the first excavation at the site and then tackles the question of just when Kourion was destroyed. He also describes a very poignant discovery: the remains of a man and a woman cradling an infant in a futile effort to shield each other from an earthquake's rubble.

Biblical Archaeology Review and *Archaeology Odyssey* editor Hershel Shanks recounts his visit to the island in "Cypriot Land Mines,"—a reference to the political divisions on the island between the Greek and Turkish populations. Despite those divisions, Shanks was able to visit sites in both the Turkish north and the Greek south of the island and shares with us the insights he gained throughout the island.

In "The Guardians of Tamassos," archaeologist Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou describes the exciting discovery of lion and sphinx sculptures that once stood in a subterranean tomb complex. Solomidou-Ieronymidou tells the story of the site and of the sculptures and also places sculptures in the context of ancient iconography.

Though ostensibly a book review, Nancy Serwint's "Cyprus' Jewel by the Sea" is actually a guide to Salamis, one of the island's most stunning sites, and an appreciation of the man who excavated it, Vassos Karageorghis, widely hailed as the dean of Cypriot archaeology.

Turning now to Crete, Jeremy McInerney asks, "Did Theseus Slay the Minotaur?" Underneath that seemingly simple question lies a more complicated one: Can archaeology illuminate myths and can myths help us in any way to understand archaeology and ancient history? In attempting to answer that question, McInerney revisits the powerful myth of the Minotaur and also takes us on a tour of the many splendid remains on Crete, particularly the famed palace at Knossos.

Completing our volume, Jane Scheuer writes of "Sailing the Wine-dark Seas," her stimulating diary of her own visit to Crete. Whether you joined us for the BAS tour of Cyprus and Crete, traveled there on your own or simply want to learn about these history-laden islands, we hope the articles contained here will teach you much about these two jewels in the Mediterranean.

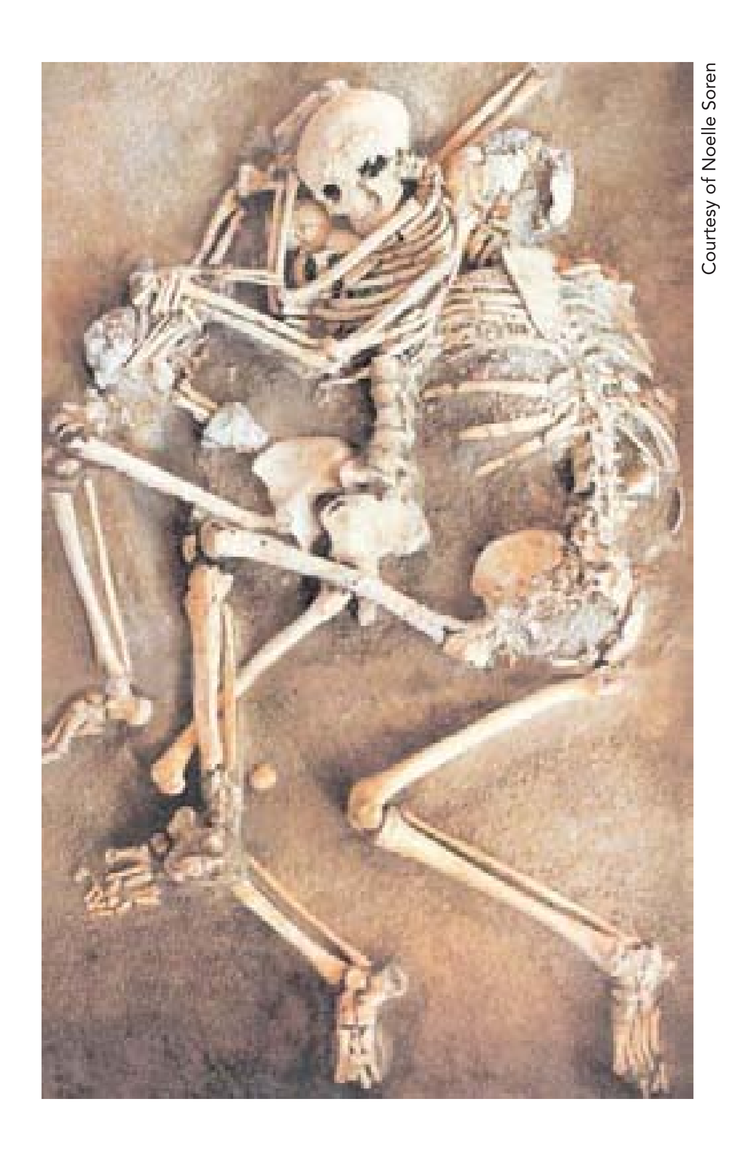
Death at Kourion

In the fourth century A.D., a huge earthquake destroyed one of Cyprus's glittering Greco-Roman cities.

By David Soren

One of the most devastating earthquakes ever to hit the Mediterranean struck a little after daybreak on July 21, 365 A.D.

The fourth-century A.D. Latin historian Ammianus Marcellinus called it "a frightful disaster surpassing anything related either in legend or authentic history." Ships in Lakonia, in the southern Peloponnesus, were driven several miles inland. (Ammianus claims to have seen this near the town of Motho.) In several places, Ammianus recalled, water receded sharply from the land, luring people out



Courtesy of Noelle Soren

Eternally frozen in a protective embrace, the remains of an ancient family vividly testify to the enduring power of love. When a powerful earthquake struck Kourion, Cyprus, on July 21, 365 A.D., a 25-year-old man (the skeleton at right in the photo) tried to comfort his 19-year-old wife, who, in turn, attempted to shield their infant child from collapsing walls. In his History, the fourth-century A.D. historian Ammianus Marcellinus described this earthquake as "a frightful disaster surpassing anything related either in legend or authentic history."

onto what had moments before been the ocean bottom—where they could examine, at their peril, the “many kinds of sea creatures stuck fast in the slime.” Suddenly a wall of water appeared, drowning thousands of people. This “swift recoil” of the water destroyed a large number of ships, flinging some “on the tops of buildings” (*History* 26.10.15–19).

The same event devastated the harbor at Alexandria, Egypt, to such a degree that an annual religious festival was instituted to ward off future disasters.

But Cyprus was hit worst of all, according to the orator Libanius, who thanked God that his own town of Antioch, just to the northeast in Syria, had not suffered such a calamity (*Oratio* 2.52). Among the destroyed Cypriot sites was the glittering seaside city of Kourion, where I directed excavations 25 years ago.

Perched on the edge of a cliff on the southern coast of Cyprus, Kourion once commanded a strategic position on a major trade route between the eastern and western Mediterranean. The site was also famous in antiquity for a large sanctuary dedicated to Apollo Hylates (Apollo of the Woodlands), begun in the sixth century B.C. a few miles outside the city.

The first major excavations at Kourion were undertaken by a wealthy Philadelphian named George McFadden from 1934 to 1953. Though he had no formal training in archaeology, McFadden financed the excavations, built a lovely structure called Kourion House (still used by excavation teams) and enjoyed playing archaeologist. McFadden enjoyed yachting, too, which proved his undoing: On a perfectly calm day in 1953, his boat mysteriously capsized in Episkopi Bay and his body washed ashore near the cliffs of Kourion.

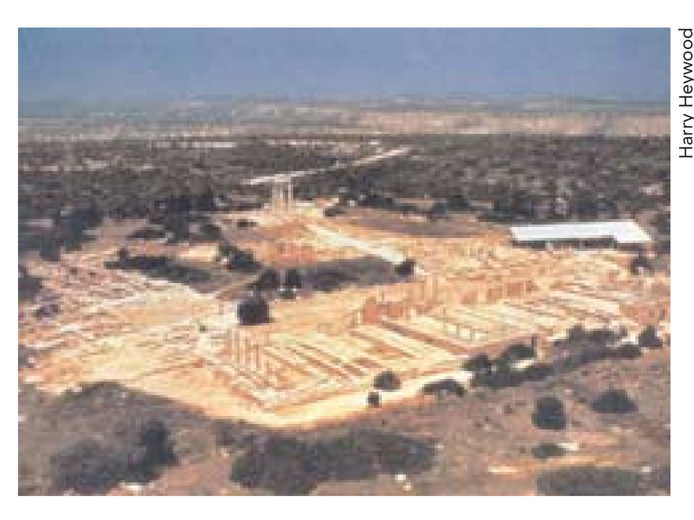
McFadden was aided by Bert Hodge Hill, an architectural historian with the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, and J.F. Daniel, the young Keeper of Mediterranean Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania Museum. (During the excavations, the 38-year-old Daniel also died suddenly, apparently of a heart attack, while on holiday in Turkey.) Neither McFadden, Hill nor Daniel ever published these early excavations. Not until 1967 did a detailed summary of some of the work come out, when University of Chicago architectural historian Robert Scranton was able to make some sense of McFadden’s and Daniel’s notes.

In 1977 Vassos Karageorghis, then Director of Antiquities of Cyprus, granted me a permit to excavate the large Sanctuary of Apollo, which I undertook with co-director Diana Buitron. About 375 feet long and 300 feet wide, the sanctuary was a large walled complex of buildings, courtyards and monuments. In ancient times, this sanctuary was a pilgrimage center, a place for supplicants to plead with the powerful god Apollo—represented not by a statue but by a standing stone called a baetyl—to improve their crops or bless their families.

After entering the sanctuary through one of several monumental gateways, visitors could proceed to the baths or to a large exercise ground, called a palaestra. Those

hoping to make offerings to Apollo, whose temple lay at the northernmost end of the sanctuary, could wait their turn at a kind of visitors' center (the South Building), a structure consisting of six large rooms with benches.

The sanctuary complex had three principal sacred locations: the Altar of Apollo, an enclosed park and the famous Temple of Apollo. We began excavating at the sacred altar, near which worshipers once set up offerings of terracotta figurines—some adorned with helmets or shields, and some gesturing for the attention of the god. The altar itself was a small, probably round structure (a part of the curve was preserved), made of piled stones. (Apollo received so many visitors that the terracotta offerings were periodically gathered up and pitched into sacred pits (*favissae*) in the open central area of the sanctuary.) Our excavations yielded a beautiful, tiny gold-and-silver bull built right into the altar's center.



Harry Heywood

Since the sixth century B.C., supplicants of Apollo—the ancient Greek god of light, healing, prophesy, music and poetry—made pilgrimage to a sanctuary complex, located a few miles outside Kourion. By the late first century A.D., the Sanctuary of Apollo consisted of a perimeter wall that enclosed baths, an exercise ground called a palaestra, civic buildings and several sacred precincts. In the late 1970s, author David Soren directed excavations at the sanctuary's altar, temple (see photo of the columns of the Temple of Apollo in this article) and park.

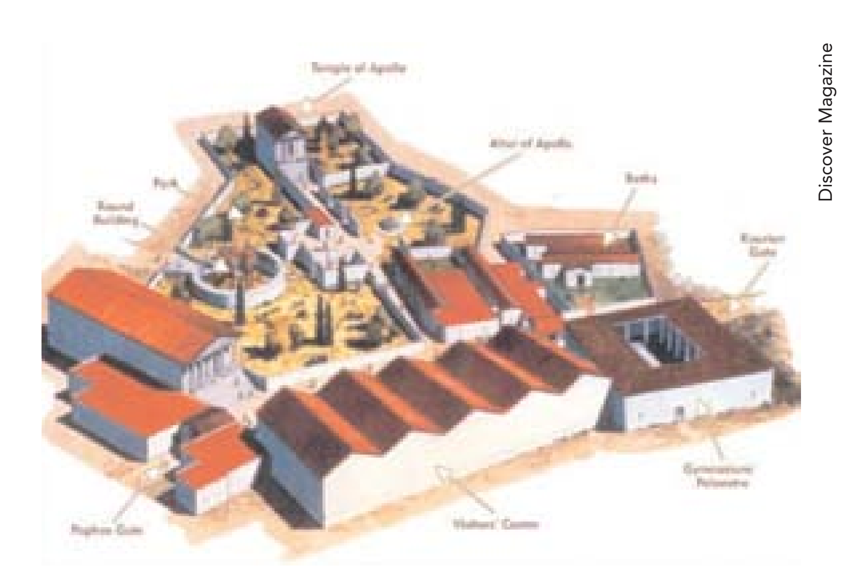
Next, we turned to the park (or *alsos*), which lay on a raised terrace enclosed by a massive second-century A.D. wall. McFadden never excavated this precinct, because its broad, flat expanse served perfectly for his beloved pastime of croquet. Very likely, the famous sacred deer of Apollo at Kourion, mentioned by the writer Aelian in the early third century A.D., were kept in this enclosure (Aelian, *On the Nature of Animals* 11.7). McFadden found a lovely small bronze image of a deer in this area.

Just a couple of inches below the surface of this raised expanse, we uncovered an unusual structure—later dubbed the Round Building—consisting of a circular wall enclosing a paved walkway surrounding an open circular courtyard. The entire structure is about 40 feet in diameter. Apparently worshipers walked, or danced, around the interior of this structure. The central courtyard was planted with shallow-rooted trees, perhaps date palms sacred to the god Apollo.

The Round Building—which may date to the sixth century B.C., though it was repaved in the Roman period—remains a discovery unique in Mediterranean archaeology. Following references in ancient sources, scholars had long sought monuments with sacred trees in the center around which humans could dance, but this was the first actual building where such cultic dancing seems to have taken place. Had McFadden

stuck his croquet wickets in a little deeper, he might have found it.

After uncovering the Round Building, we began excavating the Temple of Apollo, the last of the sanctuary's three sacred locations. Like the Round Building and the sanctuary itself, the temple was probably first erected in the sixth century B.C. and then remodeled during the reign of the emperor Nero (54–68 A.D.). In Nero's time, a front porch, or pronaos, was added, and the temple was entirely rebuilt with new columns and pilasters. When we began work, only its foundations and front steps were visible. McFadden had left behind unpublished plans showing many of the temple blocks lying on the ground, but these blocks were no longer to be seen. We later found that they had simply been covered with wind-blown debris between 1935 and 1978, the year our excavations began. The blocks east of the temple had been disturbed during previous excavation, but those north of the temple remained as they had fallen, probably as the result of an earthquake. The upper third of the temple had been sheared off, which also indicated an earthquake. It was possible for our architect, Jack Rutherford, and his assistant, Alexandra Corn, to attempt an accurate reconstruction drawing of the temple, and we began making plans to rebuild it.



Discover Magazine

Drawing of the Sanctuary of Appolo, a few miles outside Kourion.



Unfortunately, a coxsackie virus then struck our village. Coxsackie viruses are enteroviral infections causing fever, mouth ulcers and, though not in my case, blisters on the palms and soles of the feet. The epidemic killed two people and left me dazed for weeks, with a fever reaching 106 degrees. Two trips to the emergency room on the British military base at Episkopi failed to revive me, and I lapsed into delirium. Night after night I clung to my bed, afraid I would fall out of it and into the abyss; hordes of

Noelle Soren



insects appeared to be crawling up the walls. Finally the fever broke and I was able to keep food down. Foolishly ignoring my wife's advice to stay in bed, I returned to work—and promptly fell down in our storage shed, knocking a stack of old-fashioned iron wheelbarrows on top of me, which crushed my left wrist. It took several years to recover my full strength.

While I was incapacitated, Karageorghis assigned the reconstruction project to Stefanos Sinos of the University of Athens, who was noted for his repairs on the Parthenon. My team had already exposed the temple's front stairs, the pronaos and the core of the temple, or naos. Sinos then uncovered the rest of the temple and rebuilt it (largely adhering to our plan), the first reconstruction of its kind on Cyprus and the first glimpse of

Noelle Soren



The team excavating in the sactuary's altar also found pits crammed with small terracotta statues which apparently had been placed around the altar by supplicants. Although Apollo himself was not represented anthropomorphically at Kourion (though he was represented by sacred standing stones, called baetyls), worshipers brought both human- and animal-shaped statues to the sanctuary to ask favors of the god.



Noelle Soren

An exquisite gold-and-silver bull figurine was found by author David Soren's excavation team in the sanctuary's altar, a small round structure made of piled stones. Although Apollo himself was not represented anthropomorphically at Kourion (though he was represented by sacred standing stones, called baetyls), worshipers brought both human- and animal-shaped statues to the sanctuary to ask favors of the god.

Noelle Soren

The soaring columns of the Temple of Apollo were probably knocked flat during the devastating earthquake of 365 A.D. The temple's pronaos (or front porch) was reconstructed in the early 1980s. Although the original temple dates to the sixth century B.C., the structure was rebuilt—and the pronaos added—under the emperor Nero (54–68 A.D.).

what a Romano-Cypriot temple looked like. It looked surprisingly Nabataean—like the temples at Petra, in Jordan!

For some unfathomable reason, however, Sinos deviated from our plan and changed the temple somewhat. He took a capital from a pilaster (a square column built into a wall) we had found behind the temple and placed it beneath the capital of a column standing in front of the pronaos—clearly altering the original design of the temple as published in our reconstruction. He also said he found a small round molding, which he added to the base of the column capital.

From the damage to the Temple of Apollo, it was clear that the sanctuary had been destroyed in an earthquake. But when? Unable to excavate because of my injuries, I began to take another look at the evidence. It soon became obvious to me that ancient Kourion was destroyed during the earthquake of July 21, 365 A.D.—the "frightful disaster" described by Ammianus.

When large floating land masses, known as plates, butt up against one another, one land mass tends to run under the other along a collision zone, or fault line, in a process

known as subduction. Cyprus lies just north of such a zone. Quakes in the second quarter of the fourth century A.D. had caused drastic damage in the harbor of Paphos to the west and Salamis to the east. These earlier quakes no doubt caused extensive damage to Kourion as well, resulting in the evacuation of much of its population. After the major quake hit, the site was occupied primarily by squatters.

George McFadden had discovered (but never published) several hoards of coins, which are very useful in dating destruction layers. Of course, not every coin in the hoard dated to 365 A.D. If you were to examine a pocketful of change, the coins would have a range of dates. The most recent coins, however, would likely correspond to the time when the hoard was deposited, provided that you have a large enough sample. Of the more than 100 coins recovered from Kourion in stratified contexts, the latest coins

Kourion Through the Millennia



Michael Setboun/Corbis

In the mid-second millennium B.C., Cyprus lay at the center of a vigorous eastern Mediterranean trade in metals, particularly the copper and tin used to make Bronze Age bronze. Contemporaneous texts from Syria and Egypt refer to the land of “Alashiya”—identified by most, but not all, scholars as Cyprus—in connection to copper.[a]

It is not known when Kourion was first settled. Although a nearby cemetery contained Mycenaean artifacts from the 11th century B.C., it seems likely that remains of the earliest settlement are buried beneath the extensive Roman-period ruins. Kourion is first mentioned in the written record by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.), whose boastful list of vassals includes “Damasu, king of Kuri (Kourion).”

In the late-seventh and sixth centuries B.C., the emerging power on the Greek mainland, Athens, clashed with Persian Achaemenids for control of Cyprus. (The Persians eventually won.) It was during this period that the cult of the god Apollo—associated with woodlands, music and knowledge—was first celebrated at Kourion. (In fact, as early as the eighth century B.C., the site of the sanctuary dedicated to Apollo had been a sacred precinct honoring a now-unknown god who probably represented cycles of death and rebirth.)

continued on next page

were minted during the reign of the emperor Valens (364–378 A.D.). On these coins, the emperor's name is split by his portrait: The letters "VALEN" are to the left of his portrait and the "S" is to the right. These so-called split-Valens coins are thought to have been issued early in his reign. No coins of later emperors were found. This seemed strong evidence that the Temple of Apollo and Kourion were leveled by the 365 A.D. earthquake.

We also knew that southwest Cyprus had been devastated around this time. Archaeologist David Rupp of Ontario's Brock University reported, for example, that there was no habitation at Paphos from 365 A.D. to the latter part of the century. At Kourion,

In 499 B.C. Kourion's king, Stasanor, joined with other Greek Cypriot kingdoms and the Greek cities of Ionia (on the western coast of Anatolia) in the so-called Ionian Revolt, an attempt to throw off their Persian overlords. During the land battle at Salamis, Stasanor betrayed his allies, a move that enabled Kourion to remain independent after Persia crushed the revolt.

When Alexander the Great defeated Persian forces at the battle of Issus in 333 B.C., the Cypriot cities joined him. Kourion's last ruler, Pasicrates, committed 120 of his warships to Alexander's siege of Tyre (in modern Lebanon) in 332 B.C. Following Alexander's death in 323 B.C. and the subsequent division of his empire into three parts (European, Asian and Egyptian), the Macedonian-born ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy I, annexed the island of Cyprus. Kourion then declined into a small, provincial town.

After Rome annexed the island in 58 B.C., Kourion experienced a revival. By the mid-second century A.D., it was a thriving metropolis of 20,000 citizens, who enjoyed amusing entertainments in a newly remodeled theater (above) and thrilling spectacles in Cyprus's only known stadium, located halfway between the city of Kourion and the Temple of Apollo. The massive stadium, in use for at least 200 years, had 20-foot-thick walls.

The devastating earthquake that occurred on July 21, 365 A.D., destroyed many of Kourion's buildings. The site was then abandoned for several decades. By the beginning of the fifth century, the Christian community had constructed the Meydani Basilica just east of the stadium, probably on the site of an ancient temple to Demeter. One of the largest Christian sanctuaries built on Cyprus, the basilica was made from stone salvaged from nearby ruins. The city's renewed vigor is also suggested by the ruins of a palatial dwelling known as the Villa of Eustolios. Restored by the builder Eustolios in the fifth century A.D., the excavated villa contains an impressive bath complex with a hypocaust heating system (a kind of central heating, with hot-water pipes running beneath tile floors), as well as fine mosaic images of birds, fish and dolphins.

Kourion remained a prosperous Byzantine city until the Muslim invasions of the mid-seventh century, when the town was plundered and deserted. Soon thereafter, wind-blown sand covered all traces of its glorious past.

Note

a. "Cyprus" probably derives from the Semitic word *kpr*, meaning "henna" or "henna-colored"—the color of copper. The Greeks rendered the name as Kupros (or Kypros), which later became Romanized as Cyprus. The Latin *cuprum* (copper) derives from "Cyprus," and the English "copper" derives from *cuprum*.

The American Numismatic Society



Coins uncovered in the ruins of Kourion help to date the massive earthquake that leveled the city. A number of the coins bear the image of the Roman emperor Valens (364–378 A.D.) wearing a pearl diadem. Coins issued during the first years of his reign are easily identifiable: The first five letters ("VALEN") of the emperor's name appear to the left of his portrait while the "S" appears on the right. The so-called split-Valens bronze coin above, from the collection of the American Numismatic Society, is similar to those recovered from Kourion—which strongly suggests that the site was destroyed in 365 A.D.

no coins were found from the latter fourth century, and there was little building activity until the beginning of the fifth century A.D., when the whole area began to flourish under a lavish new Christian building program.

Despite all this evidence, my earthquake theory was severely criticized. At a lecture I gave in 1980 in Nicosia, several scholars openly laughed while I gave my presentation, and one called it ridiculous. I was told that the renowned Princeton archaeologist Richard Stillwell had worked for a time with McFadden and Daniel at Kourion. Stillwell had argued that the theater area was rebuilt in the fourth century A.D. Closer examination of Stillwell's evidence, however, suggested to me that he had not been able to examine the remains closely enough: The fallen theater blocks lay directly on top of coins from Valens and Valentinian I (364–375 A.D.), suggesting that the theater was destroyed in the great quake of 365 A.D.

In 1983, after I had sufficiently recovered from my injuries, Vassos Karageorghis offered me the opportunity to test the earthquake theory. But I wasn't sure where to begin. Daniel's excavation diary revealed that well-preserved pottery, bronze pitchers and a large quantity of coins had come from an area he called Trench III. This seemed like a promising place to excavate.

In Trench III, Daniel, working for McFadden, had also found the remains of a house and two skeletons. Since McFadden thought the skeletons were locked in an embrace, he named them Romeo and Juliet; he claimed that they had been trapped by collapsing debris during an earthquake that occurred between 320 and 350. (Unfortunately, he didn't study the coin hoard from his own trench, which included examples of the split-Valens coins that enable us to date the earthquake to 365.)

In the University of Pennsylvania Museum, I found photographs of finds from Trench III, including striking images of the two skeletons. In fact, they weren't embracing at all; one skeleton was curled up in the fetal position, as if seeking protection from falling debris, while the second consisted only of a pair of adult legs.

But how would I find Trench III? Daniel's diary doesn't mention the location. The site plans made in the 1930s by the architect Joseph Last don't show Trench III. And Karageorghis wanted me to begin digging just a few months later, in early 1984.

Then fortune struck. While leafing through *The Inscriptions of Kourion* (1971), by the classical epigrapher Terence Mitford, I came across a site plan by Joseph Last that I had not seen before. Tiny dotted lines enclosed some areas that were not explained in the text but were marked with barely visible Roman numerals. One of these areas, marked III, was similar in shape to the sketches of Trench III in Daniel's diary. I was sure that I'd found Trench III, and I decided to stake the entire 1984 season, and our $50,000 budget, on this assumption.

In May 1984, 15 of us flew to Cyprus to look for Trench III. On the morning after our arrival, our architect, John Huffstot, went to the site and found the trench in just a few minutes. The next day we mapped it, and in three days we were excavating.

From the start the finds were extraordinary. We were soon excavating a large building similar to a modern Cypriot village house. There was an alleyway entry, a courtyard

Harry Heywood



In another of the sanctuary's sacred precincts, the park, stood an unusual structure dubbed the Round Building. The Round Building once consisted of a round wall enclosing a paved walkway that surrounded a garden or arbor. This garden was once planted with trees, perhaps palm trees that were sacred to Apollo. Author David Soren suggests that worshipers strolled or danced around the interior of this structure—in contemplation or in ecstasy.

with a colonnade on one side, and a large main room suitable as a reception area. A smaller chamber may have served as a bedroom. The structure also contained storage rooms with pottery (mainly amphoras for wine, olive oil or fish sauce) smashed into thousands of pieces, as well as a kitchen with an oven that was still plainly visible. At the top of a staircase was a cistern in which we found a lovely necklace of amber, coral and jet.

This house showed the certain signs of earthquake destruction—particularly the collapse of huge blocks and the human bodies left beneath the rubble. When the quake struck, the house was probably occupied by squatters, who had crudely partitioned its rooms. (The original inhabitants likely abandoned the house when earthquakes struck earlier in the fourth century.) The coin hoards recovered from the house were consistent with those found by McFadden and Daniel, again suggesting that this earthquake was the famous one of 365 A.D.

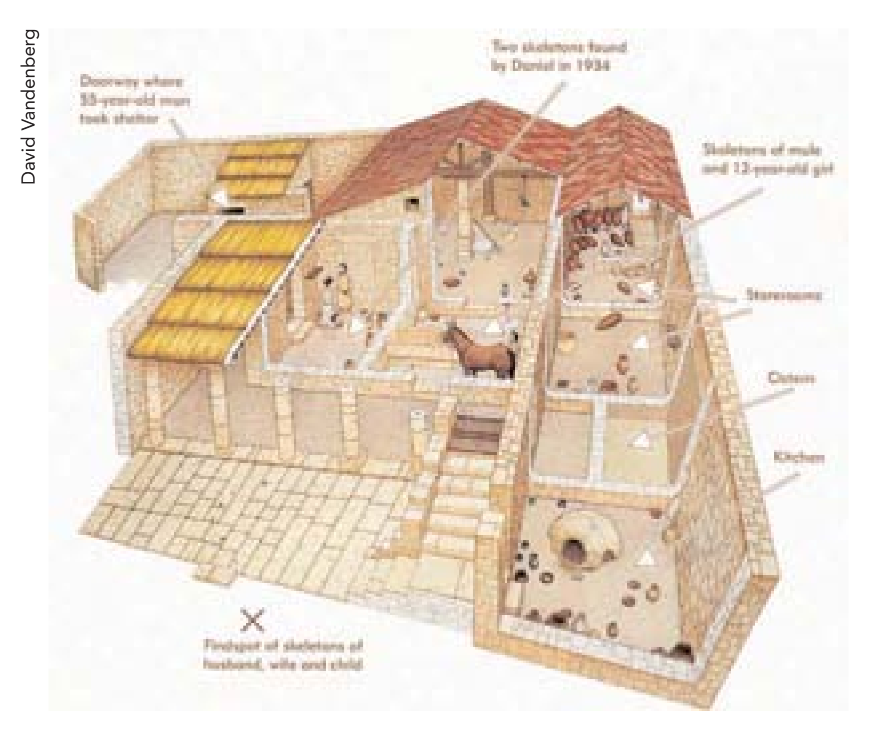
Seismologist Terry Wallace compared the data to that of recent earthquakes, such as the massive 1983 temblor in the Sea of Japan. Geologists Michael Schiffer and Reuben Bullard sought to piece together the sequence of events that took place within the house on that fatal day. Together, we concluded that the massive earthquake struck in three waves, each a few seconds in duration. The entire event probably lasted no more than 20 to 25 seconds, but it must have seemed an eternity.

One room in the front of the house, which may have served as an anteroom, had been converted into a stable. Probably during the earthquake's foreshocks, which may have lasted one or two minutes, an agitated mule, tethered by an iron chain to an 800-pound trough, drew the attention of a young girl about 12 years of age, who left her bedroom to investigate. As the first tremor hit, perhaps lasting just four seconds, the girl became tangled up in the legs of the mule. The girl was knocked about, unsure of what was up, down or sideways.

When the powerful second wave hit, striking with devastating fury for some 10 seconds, she covered her face and slumped down amid the legs of the mule. Her skull was crushed. We were not able to recover all of her body. Perhaps she was already dead (she was certainly dying) when the third pulse struck, with slightly less intensity, for about five seconds.

A man about 55 years old had taken refuge in a doorway by the courtyard of the same structure. The doorway collapsed, crushing him and knocking his teeth from his mouth. Since his legs were never found, it is likely that hungry animals (perhaps dogs in need of food) ripped them away, leaving the rest of the body beneath the debris.

Near him, we found thousands of pieces of plaster from the walls, some containing graffiti with the names of local citizens: Demetria, Eutyches and Sozomenos. These were Greek names, so it is clear that the people of fourth-century Kourion spoke and wrote Greek, despite living under Roman control. One badly damaged graffito even referred to Jesus, reading "Oh Jesus [. . .] of Christ."



Reconstruction drawing of a house that had once been a lavish villa. By the time the 356 A.D. earthquake struck, squatters had divided the house up into rooms, which they inhabited. Human remains uncovered within the house attest to the suddenness of Greco-Roman Kourion's final destruction. A partial skeleton of a 12-year-old girl was found beneath the bones of a mule, both crushed by falling masonry. Most poignant of all, the skeletons of the man, woman and child shown at the beginning of this article were found in the building's entry corridor.

Our most dramatic discovery lay in a makeshift room installed in the entry corridor of the structure. Here we found a 25-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman, presumably husband and wife. To protect his wife from falling debris, the man had placed his leg over her pelvis and his arm over her shoulder. They were holding hands; she had a hairpin in her hair. A large falling chunk of plaster had struck her skull, snapping her neck at right angles and killing her. The husband took the brunt of the falling blocks as he straddled his wife, and his skull was crushed. Lying near them was a small bronze ring, probably worn by the woman, inscribed with the first two letters of Jesus Christ's name in Greek, *chi* and *rho* (for Christos), plus the letters *alpha* and *omega*, signifying the beginning and the end—as haunting a coincidence as one might ever find at an archaeological site.

There was more. Our young husband and wife were not only holding each other's hands; they were cradling an 18-month-old child in their arms. Both were touching the child's back, and the mother held the baby's face just under her chin. Bits of the child's bones were found scattered at some distance from the skeletal group. Apparently rodents crawling through openings in the debris fed on the corpses and dragged their bones about. The skeleton of one rodent, unable to make it out, was found trapped near the skeletons.

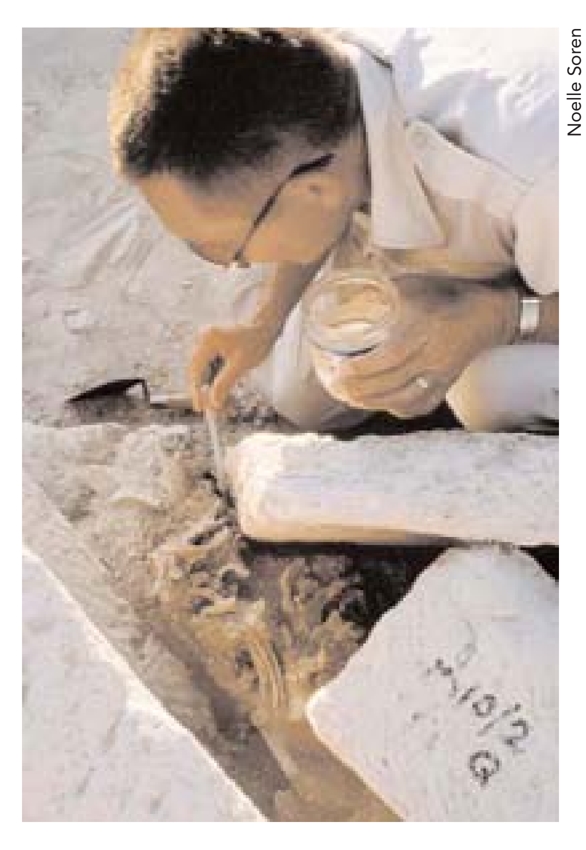
I will never forget this scene—how the husband and wife held onto each other, and how she protected the baby while he protected her.

Our entire team felt that this family should not be separated. Forensic anthropologist and reconstruction specialist Walter Birkby prepared a plaster cocoon to lift the skeletons out of the earth. A crane provided by the British Forces on Cyprus carried the

encased skeletons to a new museum at the site. Birkby then chiseled off the upper part of the cocoon, revealing the skeletons just as they had been found. The white plaster was then covered with earth and sand from the skeletons' original surroundings, replicating as best we could the immediate setting in which we had found them. Today the family can still be seen at the Kourion Museum in the village of Episkopi.

Kourion eventually rose again in the fifth century A.D. as a smaller but still significant town and Christian center. The debris, which by then had already been covered by wind-blown sand and loess, was largely left undisturbed. In places, however, it was cleared away so that new homes and churches could be erected. One of the new houses of the early fifth century shows that the memory of the disaster still survived, for an inscription on a mosaic floor pavement states that the house was now under the protection of Christ, whereas Kourion earlier had been the town of Apollo: "In place of big stones and solid iron . . . this house is girt with the much-venerated signs of Christ."

Much of Kourion still remains to be excavated. Although most scholars now accept my interpretation that the site was destroyed in the 365 A.D. earthquake, some still disagree. Only future excavations can resolve the dispute once and for all.



Noelle Soren

The skeleton of a 55-year-old man was discovered in the ruins of a large house that was leveled during the 365 A.D. earthquake. (Forensic anthropologist Walter Birkby is shown examining the skeleton in 1984.) The man probably took refuge in a doorway next to the building's side courtyard (see reconstruction drawing) as the first temblor struck.

Cypriot Land Mines

Military, political and archaeological

By Hershel Shanks



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A group of now-headless marble statues lines a second-century A.D. cold-water bath at ancient Salamis, in Cyprus. The original excavations at Salamis, led by Cypriot archaeologist Vassos Karageorghis, were halted in 1974 when Turkey occupied the northern part of the island—including Salamis. Although archaeologists from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have continued to excavate at Salamis, Karageorghis and his colleagues from the southern Republic of Cyprus refuse to enter what they consider to be illegally occupied territory.

We couldn't get to the fifth-century B.C. tomb at Pyla, said to be one of the finest of the period, because minefields were being cleared that day and the road was closed. Pyla, on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, lies near the border between the Republic of Cyprus in the south and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which occupies the northern third of the island. According to Giorgos

Georgiou, the archaeologist from the Cyprus Department of Antiquities who had been assigned to us that day, the decision to clear the minefield was a result of a recent rapprochement between the two sides.

But we hit a different kind of mine, a diplomatic one, which blew up in our face.

We had decided to visit the archaeological sites of Cyprus because the most distinguished archaeologist in the country, Vassos Karageorghis—a former director of the department of antiquities, a retired professor at the University of Cyprus and the excavator of Salamis, among many other sites in Cyprus—was a member of **Archaeology Odyssey**'s editorial advisory board. Archaeologist Robert Merrillees, a former Australian ambassador to Israel and now head of the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute (CAARI), an affiliate of the American Schools of Oriental Research, was also a member of our editorial advisory board. These relationships, I was sure, would enable us easily to get an in-depth appreciation for Cyprus's rich archaeological heritage—from the Neolithic period to the 19th century of our own era.

I knew that Cyprus was politically divided, so I made inquiries as to whether it was possible to visit archaeological sites on "the other side." I was told that we could cross into northern Cyprus through the Nicosia checkpoint on day trips, but that we had to be back in the south by 5:00 p.m. So we planned three day trips to the north. When I mentioned this in an email to Karageorghis, he replied that a visit to the north would be "unethical." He told me that an Israeli group had "very bitterly regretted" a visit to the Turkish Cypriot-controlled area of the island.

This is what had happened: Each year Avner Raban, head of Haifa University's maritime archaeology program, leads a cruise of students to coastal archaeological sites. In 2000, the students cruised the southern coast of Turkey, then sailed southeast to visit sites on the northern coast of Cyprus, less than 45 miles from the coast of Turkey. Raban wrote a day-by-day account of the cruise in the program's newsletter. This so disturbed friends in southern Cyprus, including Karageorghis, that Raban felt obliged to issue an "apology" for, in what must have been carefully negotiated


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Throughout the millennia, conquering peoples—Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders and Ottoman Turks—have been attracted by Cyprus's timber and copper resources, as well as by its strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean. The island's first, Neolithic occupants probably arrived around 7,000 B.C. from north Syria. They have left behind remains of their curvilinear mudbrick homes (shown here) at such sites as Kalavasos-Tenta.

David Lees/Corbis



Archbishop Makarios III (1913–1977), former head of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, led the Greek Cypriot campaign for enosis *(unity with Greece) in the 1950s, when the island was a British colony. In 1960 an independent Republic of Cyprus was established, with Makarios serving as president with a vice-president of Turkish descent. After a period of Christian-Muslim bloodshed, Makarios was overthrown in a coup whose leaders desired unification with Greece. In 1974, to protect Turkish Cypriots, Turkey invaded Cyprus and occupied the northern part of the island, which is now called the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. When the coup collapsed, Makarios resumed the presidency of Greek Cyprus, serving until his death in 1977.*

diplomatic language, "overstepping the boundaries which friendship allows." In this way, cordial relations with colleagues in southern Cyprus were maintained.

Upon hearing that we were planning to go to the north, Robert Merrillees asked for our assurance that if we did plan to visit the north, we would publish nothing about it in the magazine. "I personally cannot be associated with any publication that causes offense to our Cypriot hosts," he wrote me.

I replied that we always try to avoid politics in our archaeological coverage, but that we are archaeological journalists who, as a matter of principle, cannot be told where to visit or what to report. I pointed out that we had published articles on Leptis Magna in Libya, Baalbek in Lebanon and, in our sister magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*, an article by the director of antiquities of Saudi Arabia. We had also reported on the Palestinian Authority's excavation in Gaza based on a personal visit. "I think you know," I added, "that we do try to be fair and make an honest judgment." I also touted the merits of freedom of the press.

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The remains of curvilinear mudbrick homes (shown here covered by a tent) at Kalavasos-Tenta.



Merrillees replied, "I do not, of course, dispute your right as a journalist to go where and report what you wish." Our decision to go to the north, however, "leaves my role as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of **Archaeology Odyssey** open to misinterpretation . . . CAARI depends for the success of its operations on the goodwill and cooperation of . . . the archaeological community in Cyprus, and we cannot knowingly allow ourselves to be associated with anything that has the potential to have our credentials and motives questioned or bring CAARI into disrepute." Merrillees added that his stance was in no way "the result of outside pressure," nor did it preclude a future "working relationship with you and **Archaeology Odyssey**."

Merrillees concluded that our decision to visit the north left him "with no choice but to resign." Karageorghis, too, resigned.

In Washington, we had been in contact with the Embassy of Cyprus and the representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The TRNC representative arranged archaeological guides for us at a variety of sites we wanted to see in the north, but I was dubious of making the trip if we were going to have difficulties in the south. I explained to our contact at the Embassy of Cyprus in Washington that Karageorghis and Merrillees had resigned and that I did not want to make the trip unless we would be warmly welcomed in the south and provided with professional archaeological guides at sites we had selected. I was assured that I had nothing to worry about.

Both the government of Cyprus and the representative of the TRNC were as good as their word. We were graciously and competently received in the south as well as in the north. Archaeologists were available to explain all of the sites that we had planned to see in both areas of the island.

But politics was unavoidable. The depth of feeling on both sides is intense and passionate. Each side is absolutely certain that the position of the other side is blatantly indefensible. And archaeological issues have been politicized, just as everything else has been.

Cyprus became an independent country only in 1960. Before that the island was ruled by an enormous number of outsiders. Neolithic settlers arrived 9,000 years ago, even before metal was used and pottery invented. We saw some of their strange circular stone and mudbrick houses clustered at a site called Kalavasos-Tenta on the island's southern coast. The village was protected by a wall and a moat that still survives in

places. These Neolithic people buried their dead beneath the plastered or beaten-earth floors of their circular houses; archaeologists have found a number of these burials. The most intriguing structure in the settlement consists of a series of three concentric circles; the complex may have been the residence of the headman of the village or, some have speculated, a religious shrine, although nothing in the finds suggests a religious use. Much of the site is now protected by a smartly designed, round, tent-like roof that may well provide a model for other endangered sites, especially those with difficult-to-preserve mudbrick.

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The Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are divided by the infamous Green Line—a barbed-wire barrier that crosses the island, running right through the heart of Nicosia. Although tensions between Greek Christians and Turkish Muslims once turned violent, no blood has been shed since the division of the island in 1974. Foreign visitors to the Republic of Cyprus are permitted to cross into northern Cyprus for day trips—first passing through a Turkish checkpoint (shown here) and later returning through a Greek checkpoint (see photo of Greek checkpoint). No visitors from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are permitted to cross the Green Line into southern Cyprus.

In the following millennia, Sea Peoples, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Crusaders and Venetians, to name only a few, held sway in Cyprus. In 1571, the island was added to the Turkish Ottoman Empire, of which it remained a part for 300 years. By 1878, however, the Ottoman Empire was in serious financial straits and agreed to lease the island to Great Britain, which administered the island until 1922, when Cyprus became a British colony. (Turkey had sided with the Central Powers in the First World War and now had to pay the price.)

There has never been a Cypriot people as such—only two communities, Greek and Turkish. They are separate religiously (Greek Orthodox and Muslim), educationally (completely separate educational systems), economically (the Greek Cypriots have always been better off), culturally (modern versus traditional) and politically (the Greek Cypriots are the majority and the Turkey Cypriots the tolerated minority).

Nevertheless, a Cyprus independence movement gradually developed, with Greek Cypriots advocating *enosis* (unity with Greece) and Turkish Cypriots supporting *taksim* (partition between the two communities). In 1950 the Greek Orthodox Church, always powerful in Cypriot politics, took a referendum on *enosis* and found that 95 percent were in favor of uniting with Greece.

Beginning in 1955, Greek Cypriot campaigns for independence turned violent. The violence was directed, however, not only against the British, but also against Turkish Cypriots. The British expelled the Greek Cypriot leader Archbishop Makarios,

who was implicated in the terrorism, to the Seychelles. In the hope of stopping Greek Cypriot terrorism, however, Britain released Makarios the following year and permitted him to return to Cyprus.

As inter-communal strife increased, Britain called a conference in 1959 in Zurich, out of which came the so-called 1960 Accords, signed by Turkey, Greece and Great Britain. Turkey gave up its support for partition and Greece relinquished its support for *enosis*. The Republic of Cyprus was born. A new constitution established a bi-communal federal state in which the president was to be a Greek Cypriot and the vice-president a Turkish Cypriot. Each had a veto over legislation. The legislature was to be 70 percent Greek Cypriot and 30 percent Turkish Cypriot, elected by their respective communities. Government administrators were to be hired in the same proportions. Turkey, Greece and Great Britain "guarantee[d] . . . th[is] state of affairs." In effect, the constitution could not be amended without the agreement of the two communities. Britain retained sovereignty over two areas on the island for its military contingent.

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This governmental structure lasted a bare three years. In December 1963 violence again broke out and the Turkish Cypriot legislators and administrators, fearing their lives, fled to Turkish enclaves. Of hundreds of casualties, the great majority were Turkish Cypriots. The British troops proved powerless to stop the violence. In March 1964 the Security Council of the United Nations established a peacekeeping force in Cyprus (UNICYP), which remains there to this day. In March 1965 the Turkish Cypriot members of the legislature sought to return to their seats but were prevented by the Greek Cypriot government of Archbishop Makarios. Britain and Turkey protested, but to no avail. In short, the 1960 Accords were unilaterally abrogated by the Greek Cypriots, who sought to justify their position under the legal "doctrine of necessity."

This was followed by a decade of violence and counter-violence, each side accusing the other of barbarities. Talks were held in numerous forums, but they all ended in deadlock.

In 1974 the Greek military junta that had ousted the Greek civilian government came to Cyprus and ousted Makarios as well. He fled the island and was replaced by the junta leader, Nicos Sampson, known as the "hammer of the Turks." Fearing for Turkish Cypriot lives and concerned that *enosis* was about to become a reality, Turkey invaded the island on July 20, 1974. On July 23, the junta was ousted from mainland Greece and a civilian government took over. Two days later, a cease-fire was agreed upon for Cyprus. On August 14, after negotiations once again broke down, a new two-day advance by Turkish forces left 37 percent of the island under Turkish control. Over 150,000 Greek Cypriots fled to the south. The following year the two sides agreed to a regrouping of their populations. Almost 50,000 Turkish Cypriots abandoned their property in the south. Today there are almost no Greek Cypriots living in the north or Turkish Cypriots living in the south.

In 1975 the Turkish Cypriots in the north formed the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus. In 1983 they asserted their independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. That is the situation today. Northern Cyprus has been a de facto state for more than a quarter century.

One good thing: There is very little violence on either side. This tranquil situation has prevailed for nearly a decade and, according to some sources, much longer. Hence, there is not much pressure for a change in the quarter-century-long status quo.

While planning to visit the TRNC, we had been told a number of things: that we should advise the American Embassy about our trip to the north, that we would never know if we would be allowed through on any particular day or for a series of days, that 48-hour advance notice was required, that we must be careful not to allow the Turkish Cypriot authorities to stamp our passports, and that we would see the streets in the north heavily guarded with Turkish troops and tanks (approximately 30,000 Turkish troops remain in the north).

The first time we approached the checkpoint it reminded us of going through Checkpoint Charlie, years earlier, from West to East Berlin. But it was in fact *toto caelo* different. We did not give advance notice; we simply appeared. No trouble at all. The Turkish Cypriot authorities didn't need us to tell them not to stamp our passports; they knew the rules. After walking through the buffer zone, we were cheerily greeted by our Turkish Cypriot host. In our three day trips to northern Cyprus, we saw no tanks and only two soldiers posted at the entrance to a military barracks in the countryside.

The Greek Cypriot border authorities were just as cordial as the Turkish Cypriots. On our return, they would call a taxi for us and invite us inside their small office to sit down while we waited.



A blanket of fine sand miraculously preserved three-quarters of the 45-foot-long wood hull of this fourth-century B.C. Greek ship, now on display in the Kyrenia Castle in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The sunken ship was discovered in 1965 by a sponge diver about a mile off the coast of Kyrenia. More than 400 amphoras containing wine from Rhodes and oil from Samos were recovered from the site, along with thousands of almonds, probably harvested on Cyprus.

We could hardly imagine a trip to Cyprus without visiting the north—any more than we could imagine a trip to the island without seeing the south. Some of Cyprus's most impressive remains are in the north—places like storied Salamis, the 45-foot Kyrenia shipwreck with its packed cargo of amphoras that lay for 2,300 years just a mile beyond the safety of the Kyrenia harbor, and the breathtaking monastery of St. Hilarion on a rugged mountain outcrop. There are equally impressive sites in the south—like the Late Bronze Age city of Kition with its huge ashlar walls, the intricate mosaics of Paphos, and the 12th-century painted church at Asinou with its series of brightly colored panels portraying the life of Christ.

Politics was involved not only in our decision to visit the north, but also surfaced in archaeological issues. There is absolutely no cooperation between archaeologists in the south and in the north. An archaeologist with the Cyprus Department of Antiquities asked us if we would send copies of pictures we took in the north because the department had no other way of knowing what is happening there archaeologically. Any Greek Cypriot archaeologist who visits the north would certainly be out of a job the next day.

Southern Cyprus is clearly more prosperous and obviously wants to choke the north economically. There can be no other reason for the rule requiring a visitor to return to the south at night. Visitors on day trips are forbidden to make purchases in the north. Visitors who enter the island from the north cannot visit the south. An embargo on exports from northern Cyprus is imposed not only by the south but also by European countries.

Both sides know there is no solution, but they continue to hold weekly talks at the presidential level. (In fact, not quite at the presidential level: The "government of Cyprus" refuses to recognize Rauf Denktash as the "president" of the TRNC, though that is his position. Instead, he is referred to as the "leader," in contrast to "President" Glafkos Clerides in the south.)

Cyprus (the government in the south that claims sovereignty over the whole island) is due to become a member of the European Union in 2004. This could well precipitate a crisis because Turkey, which also seeks entry into the European Union, would clearly be

vetoed by Cyprus unless Turkey were to give up its support for the TRNC. In this way, the government in the south hopes (in vain) that it will be able to extend its writ to the north. Turkey, on the other hand, threatens to "integrate" northern Cyprus into mainland Turkey if Cyprus is admitted into the European Union.

The north hopes to have its own independence recognized one day. It too believes time is on its side. True, it is suffering economic hardship, but it is willing to pay that price to ensure its security, Turkish Cypriots say. Besides, the TRNC hopes to build a water pipeline from Turkey, which is only 45 miles away (mainland Greece is 300). The south will need this water and will agree to recognize the independence of the north to secure it. So the argument runs.



James Davis/Corbis

From the ruins of the St. Hilarion castle in northern Cyprus, one can see the Kyrenia mountain range (right background) and sometimes even the Taurus mountains of Anatolia, some 63 miles across the Mediterranean. The castle is named for a hermit monk who lived in a nearby cave in the fourth century A.D. A Byzantine monastery and church were built beside the cave in the tenth century, along with a tower to keep watch for marauding Arab pirates. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the castle complex was enlarged to serve as a summer palace, which was destroyed by Venetians in the 15th century.

A recent report of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (titled "Cyprus: What if the Talks Fail?") concluded that the north-south issues are "hideously complicated." That, at least, is something we can all agree on. Unfortunately, the resolution of the crisis depends less on the situation on the ground than on global issues having little to do with the differences between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots—such as the relative strengths of their lobbies in Washington and global interests in Turkey versus Greece. One former American diplomat who is deeply involved in the south told me that he would deny it if questioned but the fact is that Turkish Cypriots are in the right. Yet they remain unrecognized and shunned by the international community.

The ancient site of Salamis lies just north of the Green Line that divides the two sectors, on the east coast of the island. It is not the famous Salamis, an island off the coast of Greece where the Greek fleet defeated Persian invaders in 480 B.C., ushering in the great age of Classical Greece—but the two Salamises are related. According to legend,

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The Late Bronze Age walls of Kition still stand 3,200 years after they were erected. The construction of these massive ashlar (dressed stone) walls and rectangular towers probably coincided with the arrival of Mycenaeans on Cyprus—perhaps associated with the Sea Peoples mentioned in Egyptian texts. After a 1075 B.C. earthquake destroyed much of this city on Cyprus's south-central coast, Phoenicians established a colony on the site, restoring one of the ancient city's temples and dedicating it to the goddess Astarte.

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The mythical hero Theseus, who killed the man-eating Minotaur imprisoned by the Cretan king Minos in the Labyrinth, is depicted in the center medallion of the above mosaic from Paphos, on Cyprus's southwestern coast. This late-third-century A.D. mosaic floor was uncovered in a villa thought to have been the palace of the Roman governor.

one Teukros, a hero of the Trojan War and the son of the king of the Greek island of Salamis, founded the Cypriot city of Salamis on his way back to Greece in the 12th century B.C.

Cypriot Salamis is a huge site that at its height covered more than 600 acres. It has been excavated by a number of archaeological expeditions. As early as 1890, a mission from the British Museum excavated there. For 22 years, from 1952 to 1974, a Cypriot expedition mostly led by Vassos Karageorghis worked at Salamis. Simultaneously, a second archaeological team, from the University of Lyon, led by the late Jean Pouilloux, excavated the site from 1965 to 1974. Remains from almost every period from the Bronze Age through medieval times have been found, but the most impressive are the elaborate Royal Tombs (c. 800–500 B.C.) and the Roman public edifices.

The Royal Tombs (not really royal, just rich) are impressive, each with its own elaborate entrance road (*dromos*). On some of these *dromoi*, which are in effect plazas fronting the tombs, a horse is buried, presumably the steed of the deceased. The most imposing of the tombs, labeled Tomb 79, was excavated by Karageorghis in 1966. Inside the tomb were a bronze cauldron decorated with griffins and sirens, silver plate, chariots and horse bones. The excavators also found magnificent ivory plaques (see photo of ivory plaque in the sidebar to this article) that adorned a wooden throne—which has been reconstructed and is now in the Archaeological Museum in Nicosia.

The most elaborate building at Salamis is the Roman bath and gymnasium complex, with its columned exercise court (palaestra) originally graced with larger-than-life statues; two swimming pools; hot and cold baths, several decorated with intricate and colorful mosaics; and a latrine that originally had 44 seats.

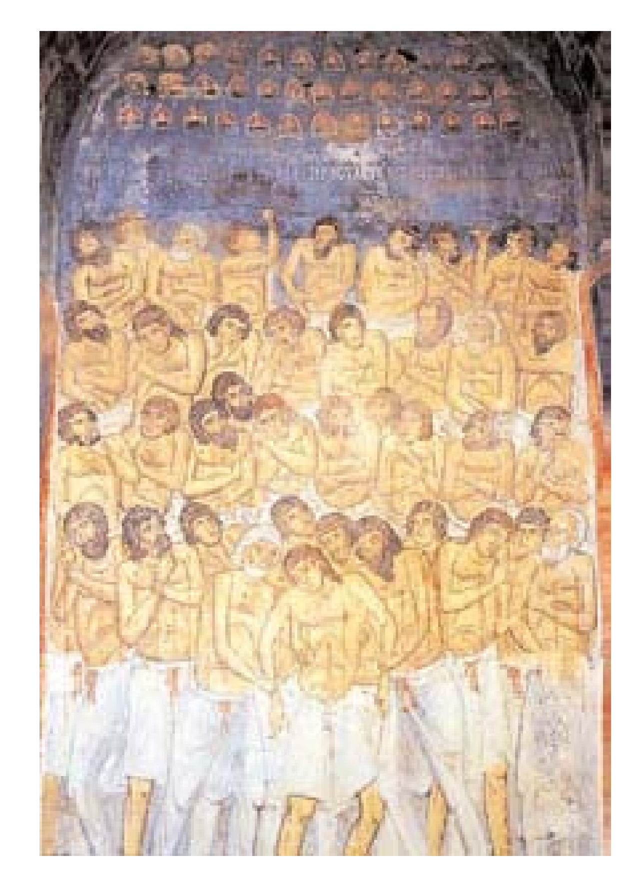


Gianni Dagli Orti/Corbis

In a late-second-century A.D. mansion known as the House of Dionysus, the "Four Seasons" mosaic (a detail is shown here) was accidentally uncovered in 1945 by a British military detachment. The youth shown here, from the mosaic's central panel, is surrounded by poorly preserved images of spring, summer, autumn and winter.

Since Salamis is now in the TRNC, a new excavation has been undertaken by Cosku Özguner of Ankara University in Turkey. "Unethical," charges Karageorghis. Archaeologists from the south claim that the Turkish excavation violates scholarly ethics because the site was under excavation by teams from France and Cyprus, which now have the rights to the site. Moreover, a pamphlet given to me by the current director of the department of antiquities, Sophocles Hadjisavvas, charges that Özguner wants to excavate "a spot where he could have quick and spectacular results."

At Salamis, we asked to be taken to the new Turkish excavations. They appeared to be ordinary excavations of a Roman bath. The Turkish excavators have also cleared the dumps of previous excavations in order to better reveal ancient shops in the agora.



Stripped, forced into a freezing lake and eventually stoned to death by pagans, the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste steadfastly refuse to recant their Christianity in this magnificent 12th-century wall painting from Asinou's church of Panagia Phorviotissa (see photo of church of Panagia Phorviotissa in the sidebar to this article), in the southern Republic of Cyprus. The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste *is just one of many dazzling paintings housed within simple, barn-like Byzantine churches in Cyprus's Troodos Mountains. Ten of these churches have been deemed international cultural treasures and added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites.*

When we told Ahmet Erdengiz, director of political affairs of the TRNC, about the Greek Cypriot complaint, he replied, "Why should Mr. Karageorghis have the only right to this very large site?" Hadjisavvas conceded that large sites often have more than one excavation going on at a time. At Idalion in southern Cyprus, for example, we visited two excavations currently being conducted simultaneously.

But Hadjisavvos had a more fundamental complaint about the Turkish dig in Salamis. International law forbids archaeological excavation by an occupying power. Salamis is now in "occupied Cyprus," he says. But, of course, the TRNC does not regard itself as an occupying power.

Erdengiz, on the other hand, told me, "Mr. Karageorghis is invited to come and continue his dig at Salamis." This is unthinkable to Karageorghis. He will not even visit the site he has loved since childhood (he was born eight miles north of Salamis, in the village of Trikomo).[a]

During the Cypriot Late Bronze Age (c. 1600–1050 B.C.), Enkomi, which lies less than two miles from Salamis, was the most important city on the island. During this period, the city—and perhaps the entire island—may have been known as Alashiya (Alasia). This suggestion is based on references in the 14th-century B.C. Amarna letters, cuneiform correspondence between two successive Egyptian pharaohs and other Near Eastern rulers. Several of the letters were exchanged between the pharaoh and the king of a country called Alashiya, which has never been identified. The king of Alashiya promises the pharaoh shipments of copper and other luxury goods. Similar references are found in other ancient inscriptions. Because Cyprus was rich in copper and produced great quantities of it at this time (and later),[b] several scholars, including the famous French excavator of contemporaneous Ugarit on the Syrian coast, Claude Schaeffer, have argued that Alashiya is none other than Cyprus.

Enkomi is full of imposing Late Bronze Age architecture. The pubic buildings are made of



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In the 1950s Cypriot archaeologist Vassos Karageorghis uncovered the remains of Salamis's second-century A.D. Roman gymnasium and baths, located on the seaward-side of the colonnaded palaestra (exercise ground). Karageorghis continued to excavate at Salamis until 1974, when his work was halted by the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus. However, a Turkish team headed by Ankara University archaeologist Coskun Özguner has continued to excavate the area around the gymnasium. In 1999, when Özguner uncovered a Roman-period building—probably a villa with baths (shown here, compare with aerial photo)—Karageorghis decried the action as a breach of scholarly ethics.

very large squared stones called ashlars. Considerable evidence of metal production was also found at the site, along with grandiose tombs with rich finds. Enkomi was apparently abandoned when the adjacent river estuary that provided shelter from the exposed harbor silted up. It was then that Salamis was founded, probably by people from Enkomi.

Enkomi was excavated most recently from 1971 to 1973 by a team from the University of Lyon under the direction of Olivier Pelon. The final report on this excavation remains unwritten. The excavation finds are locked and stored at the site, untouched by the Turkish Cypriot authorities since 1974. They would like the excavator to study the finds and write a report. This is especially important because, as the entry on Enkomi in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* states, "Some significant points in the chronology of Enkomi have not yet been settled." Ahmet Erdengiz responded, "If the excavator doesn't want to excavate anymore, that is his business. But he could come and write a report."

We contacted Pelon at the Institut d'Archeologie Orientale in Lyon. "I am in total ignorance of what has become of the finds," he replied. "It has been impossible for me . . . to visit the site officially." A source at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris tells us that the French Foreign Ministry has instructed archaeologists not to work in northern Cyprus.

"The fact is, unfortunately,—and I wholeheartedly regret it—that under the present circumstances no resumption of the work of excavation or even study may be envisioned in the near future," Pelon wrote us.

Many archaeological sites on the island, including Salamis and Enkomi, as well as the later painted churches in the north (there are many more in the south), are badly in need of conservation and restoration. The TRNC has neither the money nor the expertise. They need and want help. But the TRNC is unrecognized. UNESCO, for example,



Sonia Halliday

In the 1950s Cypriot archaeologist Vassos Karageorghis uncovered the remains of Salamis's second-century A.D. Roman gymnasium and baths, located on the seaward-side of the colonnaded palaestra (exercise ground) in the center of this aerial photo. Karageorghis continued to excavate at Salamis until 1974, when his work was halted by the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus. However, a Turkish team headed by Ankara University archaeologist Coskun Özguner has continued to excavate the area around the gymnasium.

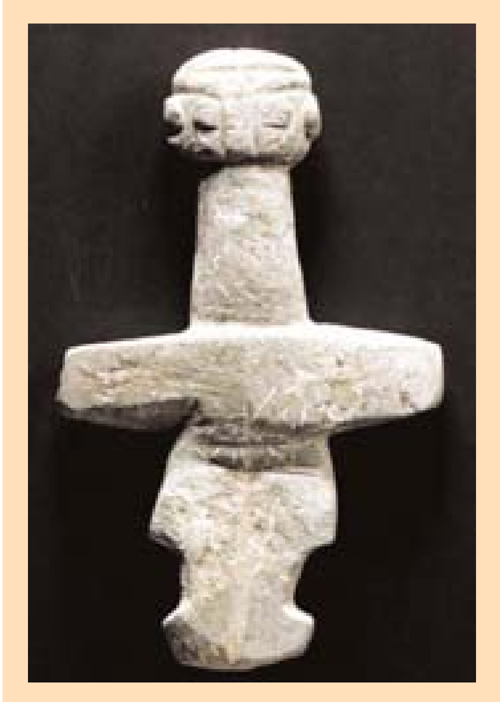
will not process an application from the TRNC, explaining that UNESCO deals only with “a state authority.”

A paradox: Everyone agrees that the work should and must be done. The sites include many that the Greek Cypriots are especially devoted to. It is not that they love the sites in northern Cyprus less, but that they hate the TRNC more. So the sites continue to deteriorate. The excavation reports remain unwritten. And the status quo will almost surely continue—unless Greece and Turkey someday go to war over Cyprus.

Notes

a. See Nancy Serwint, “Cyprus’ Jewel by the Sea,” **AO** 05:05 (review-article on Vassos Karageorghis’s memoir, *Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus* [Athens: A.G. Leventis Foundation, 1999]).

b. Even the name “Cyprus” has long been associated with copper. “Cyprus” probably derives from the Semitic word *kpr*, meaning “henna” or “henna-colored”—the color of copper. The Greeks rendered the name as Kupros, and it later became Romanized as Cyprus. The Latin *cuprum* (copper) derives from “Cyprus,” and the English “copper” derives from *cuprum*.

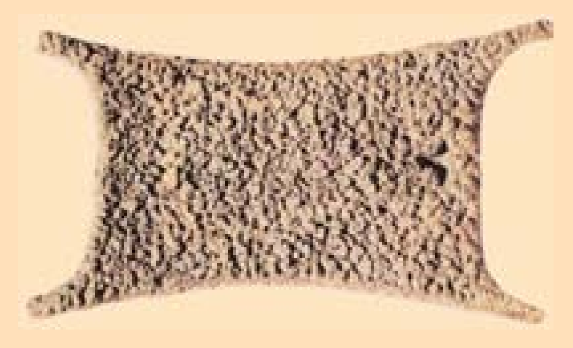


Age by Age: Ancient Cyprus

Neolithic and Chalcolithic Periods: 7500–2500 B.C.

Over 9,000 years ago, Neolithic settlers who did not yet know how to produce metals or pottery arrived on Cyprus from the Near East, probably from the north Syrian coast. By the sixth millennium B.C., villagers in scattered settlements along Cyprus's northern and southern shores survived by fishing, hunting and farming, and some lived in curvilinear homes made of river stones and mudbrick, like those at Kalavasos-Tenta (see photo of curvilinear homes in the main article). Metal objects, pottery and cruciform-shaped stone figurines, such as the 3-inch-tall figure above, began to be produced on Cyprus during the fourth millennium B.C. These figurines have been recovered from graves and ruined buildings in the southwestern part of the island.

Bronze Age: 2500–1100 B.C.

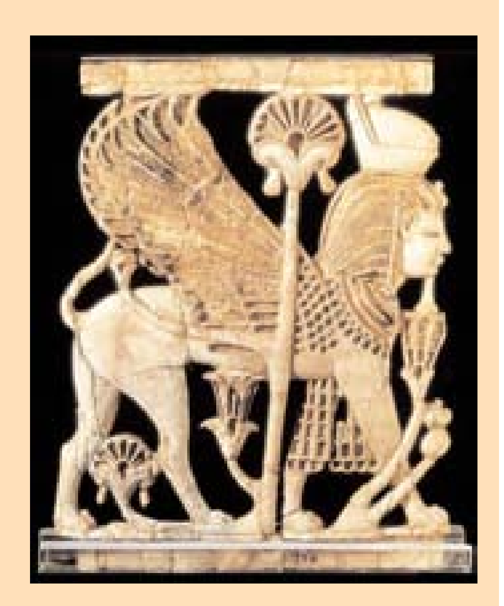


By the middle of the 16th century B.C., most of Cyprus—except the mountainous areas—was inhabited. Cypriots established new commercial ties with the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, the Near East and the Aegean world, exchanging their timber, pottery and copper for pottery from Minoan Crete, metals from Anatolia, and faience beads and ivory from Egypt. The islanders adapted a Minoan script (now called Cypro-Minoan script), and they used a system of weights similar to that used in the Near East and Egypt. Around 1200 B.C., settlers from the Mycenaean world—perhaps associated with the Sea Peoples mentioned in Egyptian texts—introduced new burial customs and the Greek language to the island. This period of cultural cross-fertilization and expanding international commerce spurred the growth of new urban centers—Paphos, Salamis, Kition and Enkomi—which grew wealthy from trading pottery and oxhide-shaped copper ingots (above), which were alloyed with tin to make bronze.



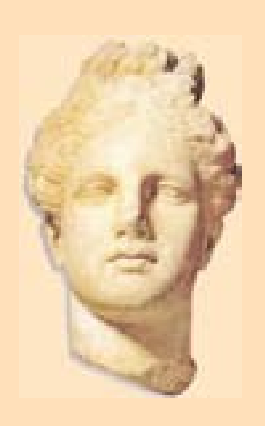
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Iron Age: 1100–310 B.C.T



Ten autonomous city-states ruled the island during the 11th century B.C., with Salamis replacing Enkomi as the dominant city in eastern Cyprus. Phoenicians colonized the harbor town of Kition during the ninth century B.C.; soon sophisticated Phoenician motifs (often reflecting the influence of Egypt) began appearing in Cypriot metalwork, pottery and luxury goods, such as the open-work ivory plaque shown above, which once adorned a throne found in Salamis's royal necropolis. The island's growing prosperity, based on the export of copper and pottery, attracted unwanted attention from a succession of foreign overlords. Sargon II of Assyria (722–705 B.C.) boasted in an inscription found in Kition that the cities of Cyprus paid him tribute, and an inscription left by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.) lists "ten kings from Cyprus [*Iadnana*] amidst the sea" under his yoke. During the mid-sixth century B.C., Egyptians briefly ruled the island, followed by Persians who remained in control for two hundred years, using Phoenicians as local administrators. Following Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persians in 333 B.C. at the Battle of Issus, the Cypriots voluntarily submitted to their new Greek rulers.

Hellenistic Period: 310–30 B.C.

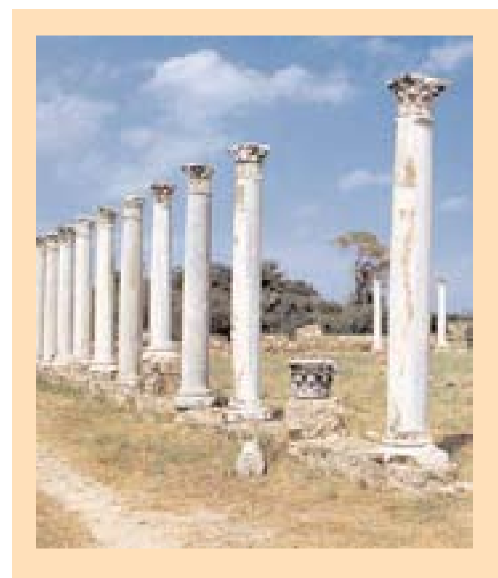


When Alexander died in 323 B.C., the Cypriot kingdoms became enmeshed in a power struggle between two of his Macedonian Greek generals: Antigonus, who sought to reunite the empire under his own rule, and Ptolemy, who claimed Egypt as his share of the empire. After annexing Cyprus in 294 B.C., Ptolemy set out to abolish the island's city-states. He accused Nicocreon, the king of Salamis, of siding with Antigonus, and then besieged Salamis and put Nicocreon's palace to the torch. Nicocreon and the rest of the royal family committed suicide rather than submit. (The fourth-century B.C. life-size marble head of Aphrodite above was found in the ruins of Salamis.) The Ptolemies ruled over a unified Cyprus for the next 250 years.

Roman Period: 30 B.C.–330 A.D.

Cyprus was incorporated into the Roman Empire in 30 B.C. as a province of Syria after the conquest of Alexandria, Egypt by Octavian (later to be acclaimed Emperor Augustus). The Romans levied huge taxes on the island and exploited Cyprus's copper and timber resources. In the year 45 A.D., the apostle Paul and his Salamis-born, Jerusalem-raised disciple Barnabas traveled to Cyprus and converted the Roman proconsul (a governor of senatorial rank) Sergius Paulus to Christianity—making Cyprus the first Christian-ruled country in the world. The city of Paphos became the

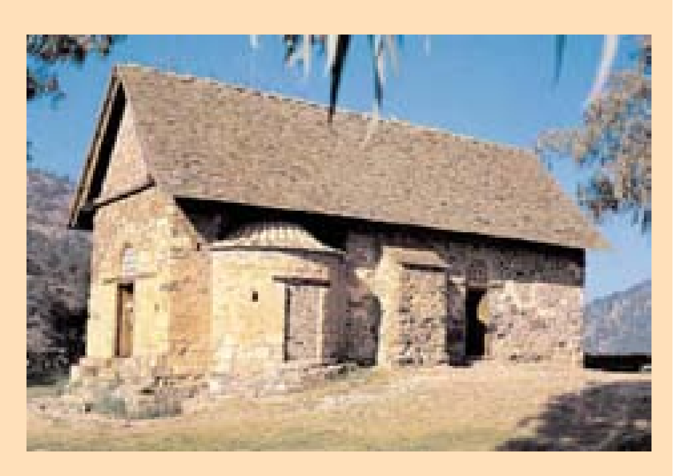
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Romans' administrative capital during this period, although the second-century A.D. Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian continued to favor Salamis, where they built a theater, gymnasium and colonnaded palaestra, or exercise ground (above).

Byzantine Period: 330–1191 A.D.

With the rise of the emperor Constantine (274–337 A.D.), the Roman Empire became officially Christian. After Constantine's death, Cyprus remained under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Roman Empire, whose capital was Constantinople (which was built on the site of an earlier settlement called Byzantium). After a devastating earthquake struck the island in 365 A.D., Cyprus was rebuilt as a thoroughly Christianized culture. The rise of Islam in the middle of the seventh century led to frequent Arab incursions into the eastern Mediterranean over the next 300 years, and Cyprus became a haven for Christian refugees from Syria and Palestine. The Arabs, however, never occupied the island; they struck a deal with Constantinople and received the island's taxes as a form of tribute. By 965 A.D. Cyprus was once again under the control of the Byzantine Empire, and Byzantine dignitaries sponsored the building of new churches. Chapels like the early 12th-century Church of Panagia Phorviotissa at Asinou (above) were decorated with sacred wall paintings (see photo of wall painting from the Church of Panagia Phorviotissa at Asinou). This artistic floruit was interrupted in 1191 when England's Richard the Lionhearted conquered the island en route to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade.



The Guardians of Tamassos

Rescuing Cyprus's 2,500-year-old sphinxes and lions

By Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou

On a cold and rainy morning in January 1997, I received a phone call from Orthodoxos Liasides, the foreman of a maintenance crew working on the monumental tombs of Tamassos, 15 miles southwest of Nicosia. The men were insulating the tombs from the destructive effects of dampness in the soil, and they were digging a trench from which they would apply the protective coating.



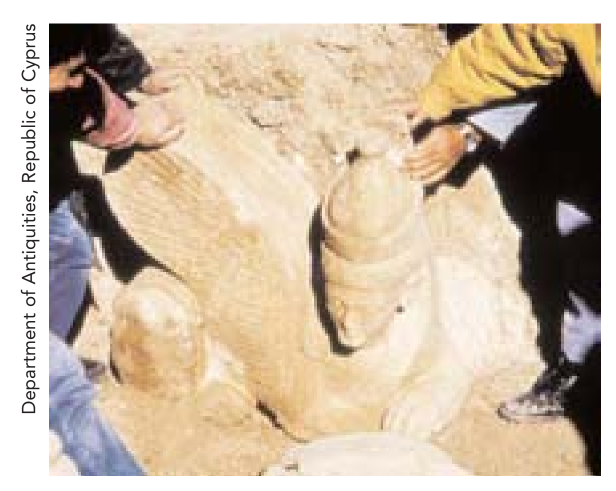
Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus

Two serene sphinxes (shown here and in the next photo) stood watch over a sixth-century B.C. royal tomb at Tamassos, in central Cyprus. Since the 3-foot-long limestone sphinxes are mirror images of one another and unworked on their backs, they were probably placed against a wall on either side of the tomb's entrance.

"Mrs. Marina, you need to come to Tamassos. I think we have found two statues," he said. "Stop work immediately," I told him. "Just wait for us. We'll be there soon."

We arrived at the site by 10:30 a.m. The workmen had already covered the area with a plastic cloth to protect it from the rain. In the trench was the large head of a lion. Next to it was what appeared to be the back of an animal with a tail. This proved to be another lion, even bigger than the first, but broken into four parts.

The Tamassos tombs, dating to the late sixth century B.C., reflect the prosperity of the city, which once grew



Two serene sphinxes (shown here and in the previous photo) stood watch over a sixth-century B.C. royal tomb at Tamassos, in central Cyprus. Since the 3-foot-long limestone sphinxes are mirror images of one another and unworked on their backs, they were probably placed against a wall on either side of the tomb's entrance.

wealthy from nearby copper mines. The three tombs, of which two are extremely well preserved, were discovered in 1889 and 1894 by a colorful Prussian journalist-turned-archaeologist named Max Ohnefalsch-Richter. He arrived on the island in 1878, the year Cyprus passed from Ottoman to British rule. Within a year he had grown weary of reporting politics and pursued his new interest in archaeology, excavating in the area of ancient Kition.

Ten years later, Ohnefalsch-Richter directed a dig at Tamassos on behalf of the Berlin Royal Museums; there he uncovered the first of the sixth-century B.C. subterranean tombs. He returned to Tamassos in 1894, once again with imperial backing, and excavated a second well-preserved tomb 65 feet east of the first tomb. (The third tomb had been destroyed in the past by villagers in search of building material.)

After recovering the lions, we continued excavating. Only a few inches away, we discovered another large statue—this time a sphinx. All this in one day! We were so excited by the work that we didn't feel the cold or the rain. Before we knew it, late afternoon had arrived, time for the workmen to go home. We left the site in the hands of the guard, Gregoris Ioannou, who stayed there all night.

That evening we arranged for a bulldozer to remove the pile of debris we had created so that we could continue the excavation. The three statues were transported to the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia. I remained at the site to continue digging.

There is a Greek expression: "The earth gives birth." As we continued to excavate, it did indeed seem that the land was giving birth. I vividly remember workmen shouting, "Mrs. Marina, there's another one on the way!"

The fourth statue to come to light was the head and, unfortunately, only the front part of a large lion. A fifth statue was also a lion. About 20 feet from one of the tombs was the final statue, another sphinx, identical to the first.

We continued the dig for another nine days in the hope of uncovering more statues, but all we found were some animal bones and pottery sherds.

All the statues are quite large. The lions vary from about 2 to 2.5 feet high and 2.5 to 4 feet long, and they are similarly carved (see photos of limestone lions). The first lion we excavated is recumbent, seemingly relaxed, with its head fully turned to its right toward the viewer. The left hind leg is tucked under the body so that the paw is visible

above the right hind leg. The tail coils up over the creature's right haunch. The sculptor even rendered bones beneath the flesh. The forepaws are crossed, left over right.

In contrast to the lion's calm pose, its head is menacing, with a wide open mouth, a broad tongue and four long canine teeth, visibly larger than the other teeth. The open mouth and sharp canines suggest a creature ready to attack—surely suggesting that the lion is a kind of guardian figure. Here the realism of the body gives way to the symbolism of the head: This creature is an apotropaic figure, meant to scare away evil.

The lion's whiskers are rendered as four incised lines that curve upward beneath its broad, flat nose. Its eyes are large and rounded, and the artist, with a touch of endearing naturalism, has chiseled tear ducts into the inner corners of the eyes. The lion's small, rounded, erect ears protrude from its large triangular-shaped head. So determined was the sculptor to produce a realistic image that he even rendered the hair inside the lion's ears as small rounded protrusions. The mane is shown by short parallel incisions, creating a sort of collar around the head. At the top of the head, these incisions form a decorative motif in the shape of a flower with open petals. The mane then continues down onto the back, chest and shoulders.

The lion also still has traces of its original painted decoration: red on the tongue, gums, ear, nostrils and body, and blue on the mane.

Another excavated Tamassos lion is the mirror image of the first one. This lion looks to its left toward the viewer, and its paws are crossed right over left. Both of these lions are meant to be seen only on one side; the back of the statues remain unworked. Clearly they were paired, perhaps at either side of a portal.



Michael Given

Although three Tamassos royal tombs (one is shown here) were excavated more than a century ago, the funerary statues only came to light recently when a maintenance crew uncovered a stone lion's head (see photos of stone lion's head) near one of the tombs. In the salvage excavation that followed, author Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou and her team from Cyprus's Department of Antiquities found three other lion statues, as well as the two sphinxes. The archaeologists believe that these three pairs of statues served as guardian figures, preventing evil influences from disturbing the dead.

The bodies of the two sphinxes—which, like the lions, are mirror images of one another—are almost identical to those of the lions, with their tails coiling up over the haunch and their crossed forepaws. However, the sphinxes have wings and human heads. The large curving wings consist of two bands of incised feathers and a decorative band with spiral motifs.

The sphinxes' human heads wear the royal double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt and the Egyptian *nemes*, or royal headdress. As with the lions, the heads are turned toward the viewer, one to the right and the other to the left. The eyes are large and almond-shaped. The mouth is closed and sculpted in a discreet smile, which is more clearly visible on one sphinx than on the other.

Like the lions, the sphinxes are not worked on the back and retain traces of their original painted decoration—blue and red on the wings, the *nemes* and the crown, and black on the eyes to render the iris.

In some ways, our lions and sphinxes are unique. This uniqueness stems principally, and paradoxically, from their syncretism; they are the product of a variety of different cultures. In this sense they are typical of Cyprus, which has for millennia been a crossroads of cultures, often creating an amalgamation all its own. That is what appears to have occurred here.

The iconography of lions in ancient art has been intensively studied.[a] Suffice it to say that as the "king of beasts," the lion is often a symbol of strength, power, royalty,

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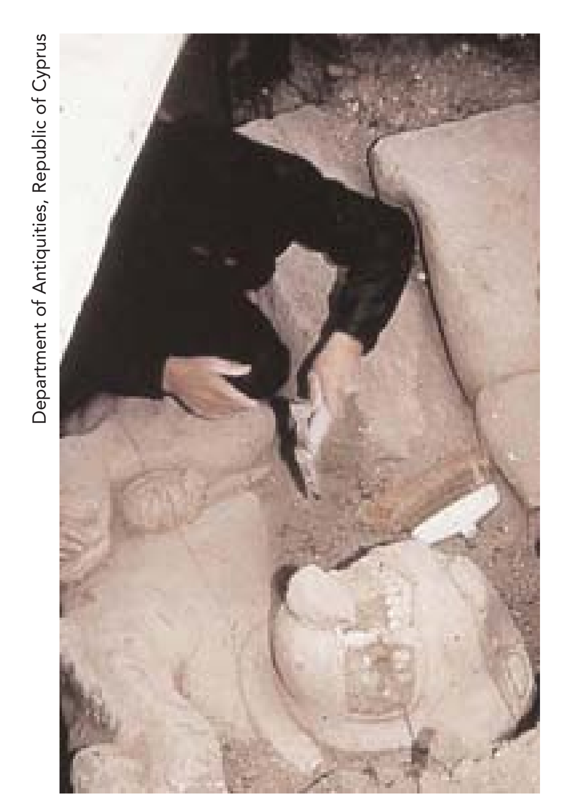


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Tamassos's limestone lions, about 2 feet high, were depicted with menacing fangs and a slobbering tongue. The body, however, is a picture of repose—with one paw gently resting atop the other and the long tail curving gracefully over the creature's hindquarters. Perhaps this combination of features suggested the supple ease with which the beasts warded off evil.

Since lions were not indigenous to Cyprus, sculptors apparently melded a variety of features borrowed from other eastern Mediterranean cultures. The Cypriot lions' recumbent pose, crossed forepaws and triangular face suggest Egyptian influence, and the naturalistic chiseling of the mane resembles stone carving from Ionia, in western Anatolia. The lions' most distinct features, however, are their open mouths, bared teeth and panting tongues—elements associated with lions carved by Assyrians and Hittites.


Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus

courage and sovereignty in the art of the eastern Mediterranean and Near East. Although lions never roamed Cyprus, native sculptors could easily find models in nearby lands. The Tamassos lions (and sphinxes), though made of Cypriot limestone and presumably sculpted by Cypriot artisans, reflect a mixture of influences: Syro-Hittite, Ionian, Phoenician and Egyptian.

The Tamassos sphinxes also show this multi-culturalism. We all know about Egyptian sphinxes, but there were also sphinxes in other countries, such as Greece, Syria and Phoenicia. In Egypt, guardian-sphinxes were placed in rows on either side of the main avenues leading to sanctuaries and palaces. Often we find sphinxes placed in pairs in front of entrances. Monumental Greek and Asian sphinxes usually guarded temples and tombs, but we also find smaller sphinxes sculpted in ivory or metal and incised on seals.

Like the lions, the sphinxes had an apotropaic character—they protected against evil. The combination of a sphinx's theriomorphic (beast-shaped) and anthropomorphic aspects made it a symbol of supernatural power; it fused the intelligence and imagination of mankind with the speed and strength of beasts.

Clearly, the Tamassos lions and sphinxes were guardians of the tombs. They were probably placed in pairs at the entrances of the three monumental "royal" tombs of Tamassos, as suggested by the fact that their back sides were not worked (and therefore not visible).

In this respect, our figures are somewhat distinctive: When such lions or sphinxes appear in a funerary context, they tend to be found on sarcophagi or on top of funerary columns. The practice of placing a lion or sphinx on a tomb to guard the dead seems to have had its origins in Ionia, on Anatolia's Aegean coast. The concept of guardian lions was imported into Cyprus probably via north Syria and Anatolia. The principal iconography of the Tamassos carvings, however, comes directly from Egypt, where the lion and the sphinx served as guardians of funerary monuments and sacred avenues of Egyptian temples. That the bodies of the sphinxes are so similar to those of the lions is further evidence of Egyptian influence, although this influence was combined with the influence of Egyptianizing Syro-Phoenician art.[1]

I leave the reader with some final mysteries: How did it happen that these lions and sphinxes were not exposed by Max Ohnefalsch-Richter at the end of the last century? Is it possible that he simply didn't notice these large lions and sphinxes? Or did he see them and just leave them where they were, rather than taking them back to Germany,

as he did with so many other finds? Did he have to rush back home for some reason? Unfortunately, I have no answers.

Notes

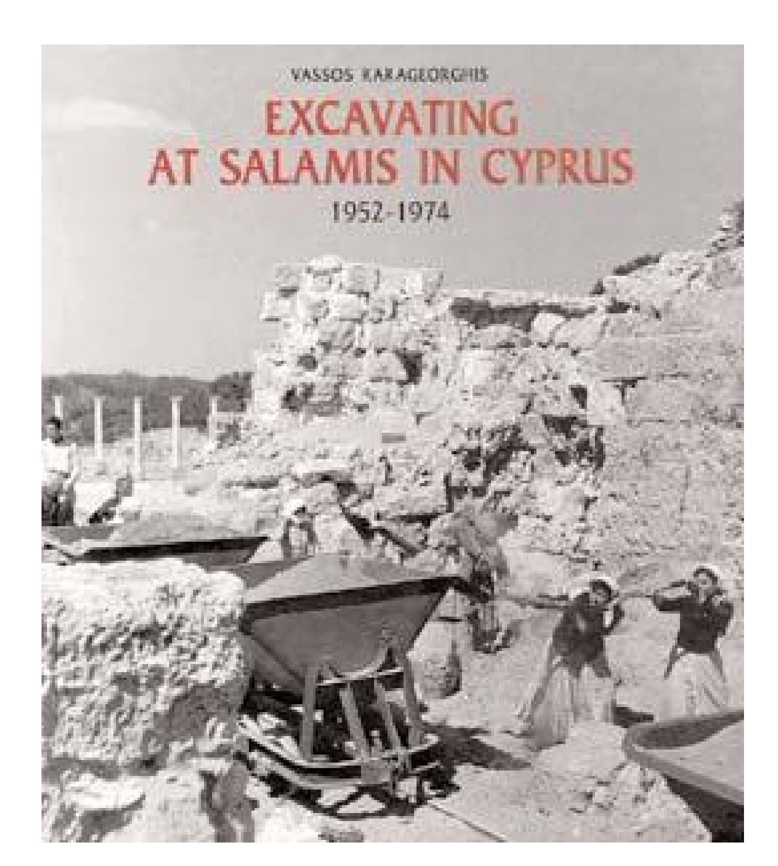
a. See Marian Feldman, "The Iconography of Power: Reading Late Bronze Symbols," **AO** 05:03.
1. See Marguerite Yon, "Les lions archaiques," *Salamine de Chypre* 4 (Paris 1973), pp. 19–47; and Annie Caubet, "Stèles funéraires de Chypre au Musée du Louvre," *RDAC* (1977), pp. 170–172.

Book Review: Cyprus' Jewel by the Sea

In *Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus, 1952–1974*, Cypriot archaeologist Vassos Karageorghis lovingly recalls one of his most memorable excavations—in a part of the island controlled for almost three decades by Turkey.

By Nancy Serwint

Salamis. Her wealth profound and glittering, her kings cultured and defiant. A gleaming marble city on the east coast of Cyprus, washed by waves that brought many a hopeful conqueror to her royal court.



Such beguiling images are evoked in Vassos Karageorghis's archaeological memoir, *Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus, 1952–1974*. The author's reputation as the doyen of Cypriot studies is based on his detailed excavation reports, cross-cultural studies and scholarly analyses of Cypriot artifacts. Nowhere, however, is there a volume quite like this one—at once a paean to the heady days of exploring ancient Salamis and a lament that Cyprus's golden age as an independent, united country was so brief.[a] Archaeological texts typically offer facts, measurements and statistics. This one speaks from the heart.

Sonia Halliday



Some 24 feet of sand covered Salamis's early second-century A.D. gymnasium complex in 1952, before the excavations of Cypriot archaeologist Vassos Karageorghis (see photo of Vassos Karageorghis).

Sonia Halliday



Karageorghis and his team exposed some of the complex's walls to a height of 28 feet, uncovered the floor of its palaestra (exercise ground) and re-erected some of the palaestra's columns. Many of the niches in the gymnasium's walls were decorated with mosaics and wall paintings of mythical scenes—such as this mural showing Hylas, a boy loved by Hercules, rejecting the charms of a nymph.

Karageorghis grew up just a few miles from Salamis, in the village of Trikomo, and he traces his fascination with the site to an epiphany that occurred during a high school field trip. While brushing sand from an ancient fallen column, he had intense feelings of wonder and awe. Some 13 years later, he returned to the site as an archaeologist.

According to the archaeological evidence, Salamis was first settled in the 11th century B.C. Greek literary sources record that the city was founded after the Trojan War by Teucer, the son of the king of the Greek island of Salamis. For a thousand years, Salamis was the principal city of Cyprus and, indeed, one of the most prosperous cities of the eastern Mediterranean world. From Salamis, merchants sailed to Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia and Greece. The city's royalty built lavish palaces and tombs. This wealth made Cyprus appealing to invaders, and the island came under Persian jurisdiction in the sixth century B.C. In the late fourth century B.C., Salamis was taken by Ptolemy I, the founder of the Egyptian Ptolemaic Dynasty. By the mid-first century B.C., the Romans controlled Cyprus and incorporated the island into its expanding empire—with its capital not Salamis but Nea Paphos, at the western end of the island.

In the Roman period, Salamis nonetheless remained Cyprus's richest city, with a magnificent theater, gymnasium and baths, all embellished with beautiful sculptures and mosaics. In 342 A.D. Salamis was renamed Constantia, after the Byzantine emperor Constantius II, and the city became the seat of a metropolitan (the head of an ecclesiastical province). During

the Arab raids of 647 and 648, much of the population of Salamis was massacred and the city was sacked—never to recover fully.

Battered by earthquakes, subjected to Arab invasions and inhabited by squatters, Salamis eventually vanished under drifting sand that, mercifully, has preserved much of the site. What remained uncovered tantalized generations of travelers and archaeological voyeurs. Many of these people—both looters and well-intentioned scholars—despoiled parts of the city and the nearby necropolis. Over the centuries, the lure of Salamis's hidden riches proved to be too much of a temptation for those with an appetite for gold and silver jewelry and other precious objects. Ancient treasures were shipped off to foreign museums and private collections.

When Karageorghis was appointed assistant curator of the Cyprus Museum in 1952, he was sent to Salamis to help investigate the area around the ancient gymnasium. The excavation team was faced with a 24-foot-deep accumulation of sand. This tremendous overlay so burdened the laborers that they eventually went on strike; three years would pass before the floor of the gymnasium was uncovered. The team's discoveries drew curious visitors to the site, but this time the flow of tourists was monitored. They were put in the hands of guides and instructed about the difficulties associated with stratigraphic excavation, which Karageorghis had learned from his teacher, the British archaeologist Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

After recovering the columns and statues of the gymnasium, the excavators decided to pursue limited restoration. Using simple equipment and a good deal of ingenuity, the columns were once again raised. Karageorghis describes how the team positioned the marble statues amid budding trees and blooming wild flowers, all set against the brilliant blue sea.

Karageorghis's discovery of the Roman-period theater in the winter of 1959 was pure serendipity. While searching for mushrooms in the Salamis forest, he noticed a large cavity covered with wild fennel and mimosa. Assuming that the depression might indicate the slope of a theater, he began to excavate the site. The archaeologists soon unearthed the theater's lower seats, along with the remains of a stage structure replete with honorific inscriptions, statues of the Muses and the radiant marble Apollo Musagetes.


Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus

Vassos Karageorghis is shown here (right) with Renos Solomides, Cyprus's minister of finance from 1962–1968.

The partially restored theater was inaugurated in 1962 with a production of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*. What an opening this must have been! Government officials from the fledgling

republic sat beside local villagers, filling the theater to capacity. Makeshift dressing rooms were constructed and electricity was provided by a generator on loan from the army.

One of the great discoveries at Salamis was the necropolis. In 1957, a local farmer cultivating his field happened to find a krater from the Geometric III period (850–750 B.C.), which he brought to the attention of the Cypriot antiquities department. Porphyrios Dikaios, then the curator of the Cyprus Museum, began to excavate the site, which turned out to be a tomb. In the *dromos* (entranceway) of the tomb, the excavators found horse burials. They also found a bronze cauldron with the cremated remains of a woman who was buried with an impressive necklace made of gold and crystal beads. Dikaios had uncovered the first of the so-called Royal Tombs of Salamis, which were built in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. to house the remains of wealthy aristocratic and royal families.

Subsequent excavations by Karageorghis revealed more elaborate burials. In one tomb, human skeletal remains (including one in which the victim's hands had been tied) disclosed the grisly practice of interring bound captives during funeral rites. The most extraordinary tomb was what came to be called Tomb 79, which Karageorghis considers one of the outstanding discoveries of his career. From May to August 1966, he and his colleagues conducted a painstaking excavation of the tomb. They found a splendid bronze cauldron decorated with sirens and griffins, finely worked ivory plaques, a wooden throne that had been covered with silver plate affixed with gold-headed rivets, the bones of horses, and chariots with bronze trappings. Even the crumbling remains of a chariot's plaited willow-twig floor remained in a partial state of preservation. As in some Egyptian and Near Eastern burials, the wealthiest citizens of Salamis had their favorite horses and chariots entombed with them.



Photo from *Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus*

Two intricately carved ivory plaques, just a few inches high (including the sphinx shown here, compare with photos of wooden throne), were originally set in a magnificent wooden throne found in the royal tombs of Salamis—an eighth-century B.C. necropolis located outside the city walls.



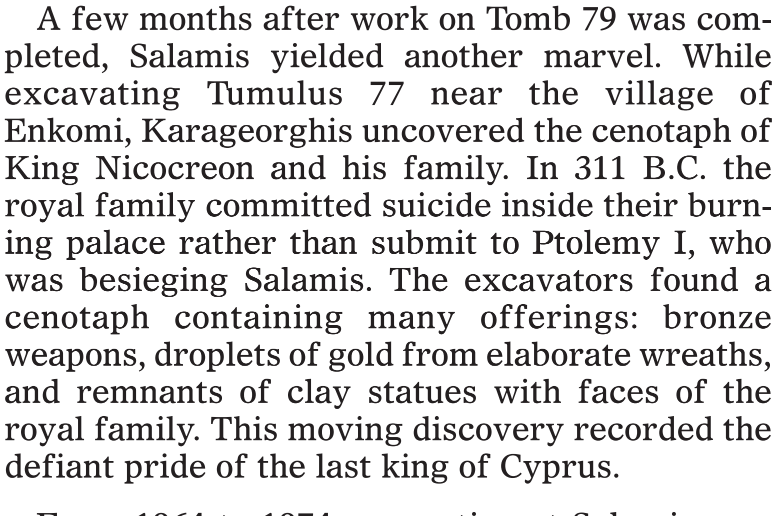
Photo from *Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus*

A magnificent wooden throne found in the royal tombs of Salamis—an eighth-century B.C. necropolis located outside the city walls (shown here in situ, compare with photo of reconstructed chair).



Photo from *Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus*

Even though the throne's wood had almost completely rotted away (this photo shows the reconstructed chair, compare with photo of chair in situ), it took excavators a month and a half to reveal the delicate ivories. Based on the workmanship of the throne and the style of the ivory carving, archaeologists believe the throne was made by Phoenician craftsmen.



A few months after work on Tomb 79 was completed, Salamis yielded another marvel. While excavating Tumulus 77 near the village of Enkomi, Karageorghis uncovered the cenotaph of King Nicocreon and his family. In 311 B.C. the royal family committed suicide inside their burning palace rather than submit to Ptolemy I, who was besieging Salamis. The excavators found a cenotaph containing many offerings: bronze weapons, droplets of gold from elaborate wreaths, and remnants of clay statues with faces of the royal family. This moving discovery recorded the defiant pride of the last king of Cyprus.

From 1964 to 1974 excavation at Salamis proceeded as a collaborative effort between the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus and a French team from the University of Lyon. Marguerite Yon, who became director of the French mission in 1972, tells about this work in an appendix to *Excavating at Salamis*. Like Karageorgis, she affectionately recalls the contributions of local workers from the villages of Enkomi and Ayios Serghios. She also highlights key discoveries made by the French, including an 11th-century B.C. tomb and the early Christian Campanopetra basilica.

After the Turks invaded Cyprus in 1974, all work at Salamis stopped. Although Karageorghis's book joyfully recounts the thrill of archaeological discovery, its pages are also tinged with a profound longing for what now is just out of reach.

Excavating at Salamis is beautifully illustrated with scores of color and black-and-white photographs that add a vivid sense

Excavating at Salamis in Cyprus

Four sirens and eight griffins adorn the rim of this magnificent 4-foot-high bronze cauldron with iron tripod from Salamis's royal tombs. The cauldron, perhaps used for making offerings, was found in association with Phoenician pottery, which allowed archaeologists to date the necropolis to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. These tombs contained many treasures: gold necklaces, ivory carvings and bronze weapons. They also yielded grimmer finds, such as the remains of bound captives who were interred—perhaps alive—along with the remains of Salamis's kings and aristocrats.

of immediacy to the excavation records. Books like this one are rare. Seldom does an excavator speak so eloquently and personally about archaeological work, and seldom are we given such an intimate view of an excavation as a shared venture between workers and scholars. This is a precious record of one of the most significant excavations undertaken in Cyprus—or anywhere else in the eastern Mediterranean.

Note

1. In the late 19th century, Great Britain took over control of Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the island since 1571. In 1960 the island became an independent republic, despite growing tensions between the resident Greek and Turkish communities. In 1974, the Turks invaded Cyprus and seized the northern third of the island, including Salamis. Cyprus has since been divided into the Turkish-occupied north—which is not officially recognized by any nation other than Turkey—and the Greek-speaking south.

Did Theseus Slay the Minotaur?

How Myth and Archaeology Inform Each Other

By Jeremy McInerney

In 1876, Heinrich Schliemann completed a season's excavation at Mycenae, where his faith in Homer's text was repaid with spectacular success. Having excavated one of the shafts in grave circle A, close by the Lion Gate, Schliemann had come down on a burial containing the remains of a man whose face in death had been covered by a gold plate, beaten out to form a crude portrait. According to a story widely told, Schliemann claimed that the features of the dead man's face had remained visible for a split second before crumpling into dust. He cabled the king of Greece and announced that he had discovered the tomb of Agamemnon.



The Art Archive / Archaeological Museum, Naples/Dagli Orti (a)

Theseus wrestles with the Minotaur before killing him, while three happy people in the background look on, knowing that, unlike the victims lying on the labyrinth's floor, they will be spared. The labyrinth was created by King Minos to provide an abode for the Minotaur. Having defeated the Athenians in battle, Minos ordered them to provide seven boys and seven girls annually as offerings to the monster. With the help of Minos's daughter Ariadne and her string, Theseus, her Greek lover, entered the labyrinth, slew the Minotaur and found his way out, establishing himself as an Athenian hero. Is history buried in this myth?

In recent years Schliemann's record at Troy and Mycenae has come under scrutiny, and many of his claims have been shown to be exaggerated, perhaps even to the point of fabrication, but part of his legacy has been a popular and widespread belief that archaeology can affirm stories and historical traditions that otherwise exist only in

literary form. Even if Schliemann were discredited utterly and we knew that he had planted the so-called Treasure of Priam, the Bronze Age jewelry that his wife Sophie was famously photographed wearing, we would still like to believe his excavations had proved that Homer's account of the Trojan War was based on actual historical events. The tumulus containing the many city levels of Troy is vividly real in a way that Homer's poetry is not. Words are ephemeral, but objects have a tangible reality that is hard to resist. When archaeology is applied to myth traditions like that of the Trojan War, it is hard not to connect the two and to treat the archaeology as a way of amassing evidence proving the myth.



Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY

Excavator of Troy Heinrich Schliemann learned about the Hissarlik-Troy connection from British archaeologist Frank Calvert, who had been digging at the site for 20 years. In 1871 Schliemann joined Calvert, fully believing that the famed city of Homer's Iliad *lay at the bottom of the mound.*

Archaeologists often decry this approach. "Archaeology is archaeology is archaeology," they proclaim. By this, they mean that archaeology is not the handmaiden of history and does not exist to generate data that proves historical or literary traditions. Archaeology is its own discipline, with its own story of the past to tell. Hissarlik, the mound of Troy, has exposed evidence of a Bronze Age culture (and later cultures as well), and these deserve to be studied on their own.

Erich Lessing

After a fallout with Calvert and the revocation of his dig permit in 1874, Schliemann left Turkey and excavated at sites in Greece, including Mycenae, where he uncovered tombs with gold grave goods, including the so-called "Mask of Agamemnon".

One can understand the frustration of the archaeologist whose work is hijacked in an attempt to prove Homer, but there is also a danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater if we insist on keeping the lines between disciplines entirely separate.

Perhaps what is needed is a different emphasis. After all, if Homer's epic poetry purports to tell the story of a war set at Troy and if we have located a Bronze Age city in the place where he understood that war took place, it seems almost perverse to keep archaeology and epic poetry neatly compartmentalized from each other. Archaeology and epic may be taught in different university departments, but Homer's audience lived in a world where there were abundant reminders of a golden age all around them: Mycenae's Lion Gate was still there in the eighth

century B.C. and in the fifth century B.C., too, the Age of Pericles. For them the past continued to affect the present, and their mythology was shaped by a dialogue between past and present.

Instead of combing archaeology for evidence to prove that epic is an accurate reflection of a historic society or, conversely, rejecting any connection between them, what we ought to do is ask if there are correspondences between archaeological materials and mythical traditions that would yield to us a richer understanding of both.

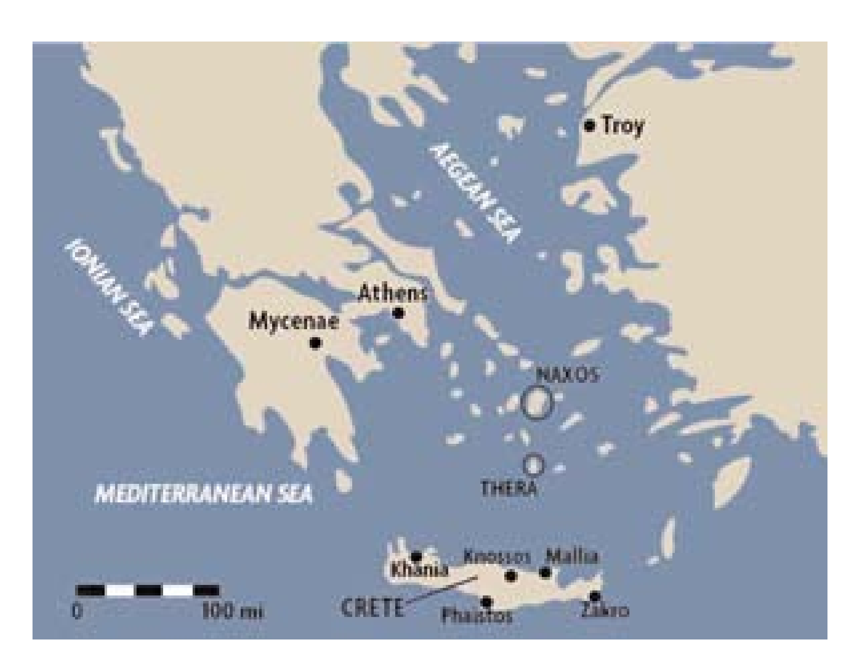
Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis

Excavator and rebuilder of Knossos Arthur Evans began excavations in 1900 with Scottish archaeologist Duncan McKenzie. Evans coined the term "Minoan," naming the civilization he was uncovering for King Minos, who supposedly ruled the island of Crete. Through an extensive and thorough excavation, Evans and his team uncovered the palace and frescoes, as well as Linear A and Linear B tablets. His restoration of the palace and some of the frescoes is still controversial. He is pictured holding a bull's-head rhyton *(ceremonial drinking cup) made of steatite and decorated with gemstones.*

As an example of this, we might consider the case of Theseus, the great Athenian hero. Like many Greek heroes, he is born of two fathers: His divine father is Poseidon; his mortal father, Aegeus, king of Athens. Theseus is raised by his mother, Aethra, at Troizen and is unaware of his royal parentage. Upon reaching manhood Theseus learns his father's identity after passing a test set for him by Aegeus: He successfully moves a rock covering a pair of sandals and a sword, tokens of his lineage left there by his father. Theseus travels with them to Athens to claim recognition from his father. On the way, he performs various great deeds that eventually will be commemorated in song and on vases. For example, he defeats Procrustes, the bandit who was in the habit of forcing his victims to fit into a bed of specific size. If they were too short, he stretched them on a rack, and if they were too tall, he lopped off any pieces that hung over the edges.

Once in Athens, again following the pattern of many hero-myths, Theseus performs deeds to benefit his people. Perhaps the best-remembered story about Theseus concerns his voyage to Crete. Crete was ruled by King Minos, who controlled a vast empire across the Aegean. His power, nevertheless, had not saved his family from disaster: After refusing to sacrifice a magnificent bull to the gods, he was punished for his impiety. His wife, Pasiphae, fell in love with the bull, mated with it and gave birth to a monster, half bull, half man: the Minotaur. This creature was kept in a labyrinth beneath the palace and fed on the flesh of young men and women who were sacrificed to it. The victims were tribute paid by Athens, which at that time was under the suzerainty of Minos.

When the time comes for the Athenians to choose the victims, Theseus offers himself voluntarily and assumes leadership of the expedition. Upon reaching Crete, Theseus



meets Ariadne, daughter of Minos. She falls in love with Theseus and helps him to make his way in and out of the labyrinth by means of a thread tied to the lintel at the entrance to the maze. At the heart of the labyrinth Theseus finds the Minotaur asleep and manages to slay him, with his bare fists in some versions. Retracing his steps via the thread, he escapes and flees with Ariadne. On the pair's arrival at Naxos, Dionysus sees Ariadne and, smitten with her beauty, carries her off. Because of his grief at losing her, Theseus sails on to Athens with a black sail on his ship instead of a white one, the signal intended to show that the Athenians have been successful and that the youths have been saved. Thinking that his son has perished in the labyrinth, Aegeus hurls himself down from the Acropolis and dies, giving his name to the Aegean Sea.

Is there any point at which this story can shed light on the history of the Bronze Age Aegean that has emerged over the last century?

To answer that question we must look at the archaeology of Crete. Since the late 19th century, when Sir Arthur Evans commenced excavations at Knossos, it has become clear that Crete was home to an extraordinary civilization in the second millennium B.C. Based on pottery sequences, archaeologists are now able to chart the growth of Minoan culture on Crete from a prepalatial period during the late third millennium B.C. to the period of greatest power and prosperity in the second half of the second millennium—the First Palatial period, which lasted from approximately 1900 to 1700 B.C., followed by the Second Palatial period, which ran from approximately 1700 to 1450 B.C. and even a third and final phase that centered on Knossos from perhaps 1450 to 1300 B.C. These absolute dates should be treated with caution, but the dates are not central to our story. The terminology, however, does alert us to two important features of Cretan society. We refer to the civilization of Bronze Age Crete as *palatial* because palaces were at the heart of all economic, political and religious life. The division into successive, discrete periods also serves to remind us that the palaces experienced fluctuating fortunes, at times enjoying enormous prosperity and at other times suffering destruction and abandonment.

The palaces were located around the coastline of Crete at Knossos, Mallia, Zakro, Phaistos and Khania. From here Minoan fleets put out to sea and engaged in trade or raiding throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Shipwrecks from the end of the Bronze

Age, such as the Uluburun wreck excavated by George Bass off the coast of Turkey, revealed cargoes of glass ingots, tin, copper, Baltic amber, scarabs of lapis lazuli, and drinking cups. When we add perishable items such as perfumes, textiles, spices and slaves, all of which were certainly among the items circulating around the eastern Mediterranean, it comes as no surprise that the Minoans grew rich on their control of the trade routes that reached Egypt and Syria to the east and south and the Adriatic in the west.

On Crete itself, social organization appears to have been increasingly stratified. It is not difficult to imagine an elite of sophisticated consumers dominating life in the palaces, and, as with any complex society, the complement of this palatial ruling class was the large force of farmers and artisans who produced the food, the pottery, the exquisite jewelry and the artwork that the elite enjoyed. The exact nature of this social stratification and how it worked in practice remains somewhat opaque; for example, we don't know if kings or queens, or both, sat on the throne. Were they high priests ruling on behalf of the gods or taken as incarnations of the gods? We simply don't know.

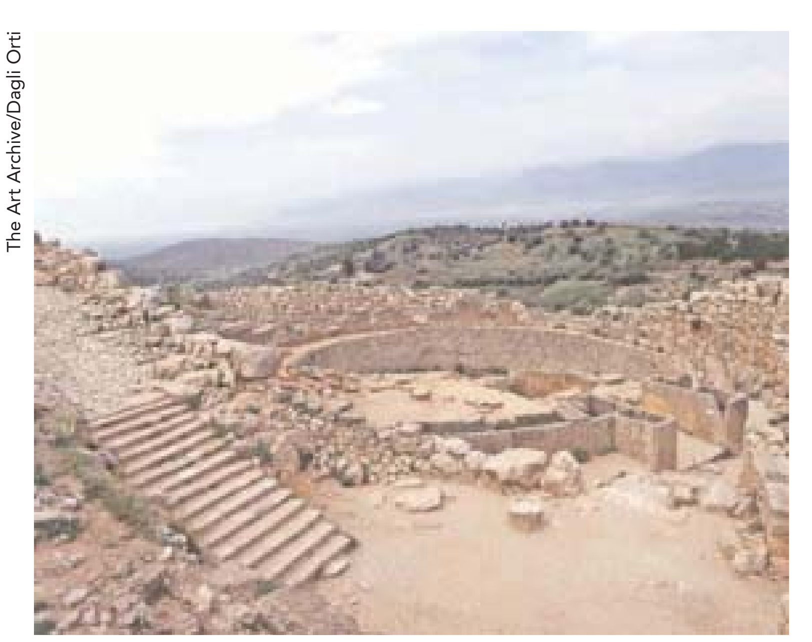
We are also in the dark when it comes to the world of ideas and beliefs inhabited by the Minoans since we do not possess any Minoan literature. No hymns or prayers survive to reveal their religious system. Instead we have to rely on mute sources, such as the frescoes decorating their shrines and cult centers, as well as carved gemstones and seals that depict cultic activity. These suggest that the Minoans recognized a powerful goddess who is sometimes shown looming over lesser mortals. Also, many household shrines have revealed bell-shaped figurines showing goddesses, or perhaps the one goddess in various forms, in a characteristic pose with arms open and bent upwards at the elbow. Faience figurines of women wearing the characteristic Minoan flounced skirt with snakes wrapped around their arms may be depictions of goddesses or the priestesses who served them.



Erich Lessing

A REGAL ENTRANCE. Built around 1260 B.C., the Lion Gate guards the entrance to Mycenae, a powerful Bronze Age citadel. The city thrived from 1600–1100 B.C. and, according to the Iliad, *was once ruled by King Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus and leader of the Greeks in the Trojan War.*

Another deity, or at least a divine principle, worshiped by the Minoans was the bull. Again, we rely on the evidence of frescoes and gems that show how the Minoans practiced an astonishing ritual that consisted of grasping a bull by its horns and leaping over its back. When we add to this the ubiquity of stylized bulls' horns, so-called "horns of



The Art Archive/Dagli Orti

FIT FOR A CHIEFTAIN. Constructed in the 16th century B.C. and discovered by Schliemann in 1876, grave circle A held skeletons, swords and daggers, suggesting that the graves were the burial site of warrior rulers. Some of the grave goods can be traced to Asia Minor and Egypt, reflecting the expansive Mycenaean trade network. Schliemann discovered the famous "Mask of Agamemnon" in this grave circle.

consecration," as well as the bull's-head *rhyta* (drinking vessels; singular, *rhyton*) and vivid portraits of individual beasts, there can be no doubt that the Minoans treated the bull with deep reverence. To them it was the embodiment of masculine power. The bull may well have represented the young male consort of the goddess of love, a pattern that recurs throughout the ancient near east from Tammuz and Ishtar to Venus and Adonis, although if this is the case we cannot even give names to the Cretan versions of this divine couple.

One other aspect of Minoan culture requires mention. The Minoans were literate, or more accurately, their society included a class of scribes who employed a script, Linear A, to record the goods placed in the great storage rooms of the palaces and to mark vessels and objects dedicated in their sanctuaries. Linear A has not been deciphered, but the presence of clay tablets inscribed with this script both on Crete and further afield fits with a general picture of expanding Cretan influence in the Second Palatial period. Some scholars have gone so far as to refer to the Minoization of the Aegean during the Late Bronze Age. Whether this resulted in political domination by Knossos or one of the other Cretan palaces cannot be proved. However, the growth of Cretan power is undeniable. Cretan looms and weights were adopted far abroad, and conical cups popular in Cretan rituals turn up in increasing numbers. Frescoes found on the island of Thera reflect such pervasive Minoan influence that some scholars have interpreted them as evidence for Thera's origins as a Minoan colony. (Minoan frescoes have even been found in Israel and Egypt; see "Minoan Frescoes in Egypt, Turkey and Israel" sidebar.)

Linear A and its successor, Linear B, play an important part in our story. In the final phase of Knossos's occupation, the writing used to record palace inventories was Linear B. Although some of the ideograms in this script are very close to Linear A, suggesting that the two are related as writing systems, Linear B has been successfully deciphered, unlike its predecessor. The language somewhat awkwardly rendered into the syllabary of Linear B is a form of Greek, while Linear A is not. It seems, then, that the occupants of Knossos in this Third Palatial period were Greek speakers and that

they had replaced their Minoan predecessors in control of Cretan society and palatial culture. This shift can hardly signify anything less than an invasion of Minoan Crete from mainland Greece. (Linear B tablets have also turned up in great numbers at Pylos, Mycenae, Tiryns and most recently at Thebes.) This is not surprising. In fact, the takeover of the Minoan palaces by invaders from the mainland is the culmination of competition between mainland Mycenaean Greeks and the Minoans that had been brewing for two hundred years.

On mainland sites like Mycenae, the material record shows a taste for Minoan handicrafts in pottery shapes and decoration and in jewelry. The Mycenaean Greeks were in close contact with the Minoans, importing goods and perhaps even craftsmen from Crete. However, the relationship had not been entirely amicable. For all of the appeal of Minoan style to the Mycenaeans, there was genuine competition between them along the trade routes of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean. As the fortunes of the Minoans waned, measured by the shrinking amount of their pottery found beyond Crete, so, too, Mycenaean material increased in volume. It turns up further afield as well. Even if this evidence does not support the notion of a trade war, an anachronistic concept that implies too great a degree of central authority, coordination and organization, it is not too much to imagine the warlords of Mycenae increasingly turning their attention to Crete. The ruling elite of the Mycenaean world buried its leaders with their weapons, finely made blades inlaid with silver and enamel, and marked their graves with stelae adorned with chariots. This was a culture with a warrior ethos. At some point it would have dawned on one of these Mycenaean princes that the palaces of Crete, with all their wealth, were not protected by walls. It seems clear that it was Greeks who ruled at Knossos in its final phase and that the complex, hierarchical organization of palatial culture was brought back to the Greek mainland and applied to Mycenaean states such as



Vanni/Art Resource, NY

The flower-like jewel from Tomb III at Mycenae was part of a cache of jewelry. Homer referred to the city as "rich in gold," as indeed it was.



Erich Lessing

The hexagonal box, discovered by Schliemann in grave K, displays hunting scenes and corkscrew designs on its 12 panels.



The Art Archive / National Archaeologica Museum Athens / Dagli Orti

Gold artifacts from tombs at Mycenae reflect the Mycenaean interest in wealth and status. The inlaid dagger blade from grave circle A depicts a lion hunt.


Vanni/Art Resource, NY

This bronze and gold libation vase in the form of a bull was unearthed at Mycenae. For the Minoans, whose culture considerably influenced the Mycenaeans, bulls were especially revered.

The infamous Minotaur, half human, half bull, was born to the wife of king Minos, Pasiphae, after she mated with a bull, a punishment inflicted by the gods after her husband failed to sacrifice a bull to Poseidon. On Minos's orders, the creature lived in the labyrinth and ate the unfortunate people who ended up in the maze—until the Greek hero Theseus killed it.

Pylos, Mycenae and Thebes. By the end of the Bronze Age, Mycenae must have looked like a rougher version of its more sophisticated Cretan cousin at Knossos.

The final phase of both cultures occurred toward the end the 13th century B.C., when the complex social and economic systems of the Palatial period simply collapsed. No single factor explains this collapse. It remains somewhat of a mystery, but an explanation is not significant to our story.

The aftermath of this breakdown brings us back to Theseus. Here we have a hero whose cycle of stories touches upon all sorts of themes. There is the unknown young man who must prove his character is a match for the royal status he is destined to enjoy. There is the adventurer who travels to Hades and the king who saves his people and unites all of Attica. There is also the mainlander who travels to Crete to throw off the oppressive burden of Minoan control.

I am not suggesting that we read this as if the story corresponds strictly to historical events. The popularity of Theseus's story for hundreds of years is not, in and of itself, sufficient to prove that there was ever an individual who single-handedly saved Athens from foreign domination, whether by Cretans or Amazons. Nevertheless, the preceding summary of Crete and mainland Greece in the second millennium shows that the myth and the story told by archaeology are not entirely divorced from each other. It is not going too far to suggest that the myth may contain a memory, the memory of a great and prosperous earlier age during which the mainland saw Crete as powerful and dominant.

To be sure, the story of Theseus and the Minotaur is hardly the equivalent of scientific archaeology with its ability to test the contents of Minoan storage vessels or to use ground-penetrating radar to find traces of the settlements that surrounded the palace at Knossos. Even so, telling a story set in a mysterious labyrinth, which surely corresponds to the many levels, corridors and staircases of Knossos, is, like archaeology, an interpretation of the past, anchored in a specific place and shaped by familiarity with it. Myth serves many functions, but one powerful impetus behind mythology is an overwhelming human


Institute of Nautical Archaeology

An underwater archaeologist excavates a copper oxhide-shaped ingot from the Uluburun wreck off the coast of Turkey. Ingots—flat, rectangular metal slabs with four concave sides and similar to the shape of an animal skin—were an easy way to stack and transport metal. The ship's cargo included copper ingots, storage jars, gold jewelry and domestic pottery dating to approximately 1300 B.C., a cache probably typical of the trade Minoans engaged in.

drive to tell stories, to take dim memories, confused images, puzzling and half-understood reminders of the past and to put them into some kind of order. If archaeology is our way of understanding the past, mythology was the Greeks' way of understanding theirs.

Stories have a beginning, middle and end. They repeat motifs, and they reassure us, the audience, by rendering the confusion and unpredictability of life into neat narrative patterns: the hero is set a task, goes on his quest, is victorious and restores order. To the Greeks, the story of Theseus was a cycle of myths that helped them deal with their own past, which was situated in actual places still visible in their landscape. The ancient Greeks could see, touch and feel Knossos and Mycenae. They wondered who had lived there. Were they their ancestors? Had they once ruled the seas?

So what does the story of Theseus on Crete say to the Greeks? It recognizes that Crete was home to a wealthy culture based on naval power. Thucydides, a sober historian who might have rejected these stories as fabrications, has this to say about Minoan sea power:

> But as soon as Minos had formed his navy, communication by sea became easier, as he colonized most of the islands, and thus expelled the malefactors. The coast populations now began to apply themselves more closely to the acquisition of wealth, and their life became more settled; some even began to build themselves walls on the strength of their newly acquired riches.
>
> (Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* 1.8.2–3)

For the historian, then, there was no doubt that Crete had been the super-power of an earlier age. In the story of Theseus, poets and mythographers were forging a connection between Athens's past and that superpower. Where history deals with places, events and processes, mythology could transform this into a story on a human scale: Theseus traveled to Crete. An Athenian prince slew the Minotaur. Does this recall a historic event in which the Mycenaeans forcefully overthrew their Minoan overlords?


Erich Lessing

Bull-jumping, in which a man grabbed a bull's horns and vaulted over its back, was popular among Minoans, who seemed to have revered bulls. They considered the animal an incarnation of masculine power, possibly representing a female deity's consort.

Aside from explaining the past and linking it to the present, the story also served to stake a specifically Athenian claim to importance in the past, correlating to their status at the time when the stories gained popularity in the fifth century B.C. This was the age when Athens became a mighty naval power, its ships patrolling the Aegean and exacting tribute from its allies. In one sense, then, the story of Theseus resisting the impositions of Minos and his ghastly tribute is an inversion of Athens's own imperial position. How reassuring, at a time when the Athenians in reality deliberated on the fate of subject peoples, on occasion voting to execute entire populations, that they should have a national myth involving a hero who liberated victims from unjust exactions. This is the kind of mythologizing designed to mask the abuse of power, by casting the powerful as morally superior.

We should not ignore the circumstances in which the story of Theseus became fixed in the imagination of the Athenians. In the period after the Persian Wars, democratic Athens was casting about for stories that glorified its own might; it was, after all, a city that had come to prominence in defending Greece from the Persians. Until now, Sparta had been seen as the unchallenged champion in the field of battle, but at Marathon in 490 B.C., the Athenians had acquitted themselves triumphantly, and at Salamis their navy and their tactics had made the difference between


Nimatallah/Art Resource, NY

NOT YOUR EVERYDAY FASHION. At Knossos, Evans discovered this serpent goddess (or priestess) with her flounced skirt, apron and open bodice, an example of Minoan ritual dress. In each hand she holds a snake, possibly a religious symbol. Since only paintings and statuary were discovered at the site, but no descriptive writing, nothing more definite can be said about the woman in this striking representation.

defeat and victory. It is telling, therefore, to find that the Athenian Treasury at Delphi should at this time have been decorated with two sets of metopes: one set commemorates the Dorian hero *par excellence*, Herakles, while the second set matches his labors with those of the younger, fresh-faced Ionian hero: Theseus. In this way the Athenians staked their claim: We have our (Athenian) hero, just as important and powerful as your (Spartan) hero.

On this reading, no Greek myth is ever likely to have only one meaning. Jungian archetypes arising from a collective unconscious may help us to recognize certain patterns in myth, but the key to myth is its flexibility. It can repeat age-old patterns but can also serve new and particular ends arising at specific times and under specific conditions. The Athenian hero Theseus provided the Athenians with a way of imagining how they fit into a world that included a glorious but distant past (Crete), foreign threats successfully defeated (Persians and Amazons) and fellow Greeks with whom they were in competition (Spartans and Herakles).

For those whose interests are focused on the Bible and Biblical archaeology, the example of Theseus may offer some food for thought. On the model I am suggesting here, it would be a dangerous enterprise to try to employ archaeology to prove the Bible in any literal way, since Biblical traditions and archaeology are fundamentally different kinds of narratives about the past. On the other hand, it is certainly worth trying to read the stories of the Bible with a view to understanding the time and setting in which those stories were generated. Take, for example, the strong bias in the Pentateuch toward desert nomadism. It is Cain, the farmer, whose offerings are not pleasing to the Lord, unlike Abel's offering of the firstborn from his flock, which is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. The herder's sacrifice is preferable to the sedentary farmers. Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah are variations on a theme: the city and civilization are tied to corruption. In the desert lies purification. If Knossos was both a real place and the setting for Theseus's killing of

Nimatallah/ Art Resource, NY



MANY OARS MAKE A FASTER SHIP. This 13th-century B.C. fresco from the island of Thera (modern Santorini) reflects the importance of ships and nautical prowess in the Late Bronze Age, a time that witnessed what some scholars refer to as the Minoization of the Aegean. Such frescoes, along with the island's architecture and pottery, suggest that Thera had Minoan origins. The Minoans retained a strong sea presence and traded with Egypt, the Near East and Greece, where fine Minoan objects were found in the grave circles at Mycenae. Thera, located 60 miles from Crete, would have been a natural port for the Minoans as they made connections with eastern Mediterranean ports.

the Minotaur, then surely Babel is both Babylon and the symbol of human arrogance. "This is but the start of their undertakings," observes Yahweh, upon seeing "the tower that the sons of man had built" (Genesis 11:5–6). In other words, we are in the fortunate position of having both concrete, or at least mud-brick, evidence for the world of the patriarchs, thanks to archaeology, and complementary evidence for the world of the imagination that they inhabited. In that world there was a Babylon, and it was evil.

In a similar way, the story of Exodus lends itself to a reading that moves beyond using archaeology to prove the Biblical narrative. Archaeology identifies a complex and magnificent civilization in second-millennium Egypt, but the stories of the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt, their flight from Egypt and the arrival in the Promised Land provide a much richer mytho-poetical viewpoint and a way for the Israelites to address their past (which may well have taken place in Egypt) and their special relationship with their God. As they pass through the desert, they are purified, given laws by Moses, the great culture hero of Israelite tradition, and reunited with God. Their arrival in Canaan puts an end to an exile that began with the expulsion from Eden. Instead of looking for literal confirmation of myth-history in archaeology, or vice versa, we read these narratives to understand the fears, anxieties, hopes and dreams that shaped the Hebrew Bible.

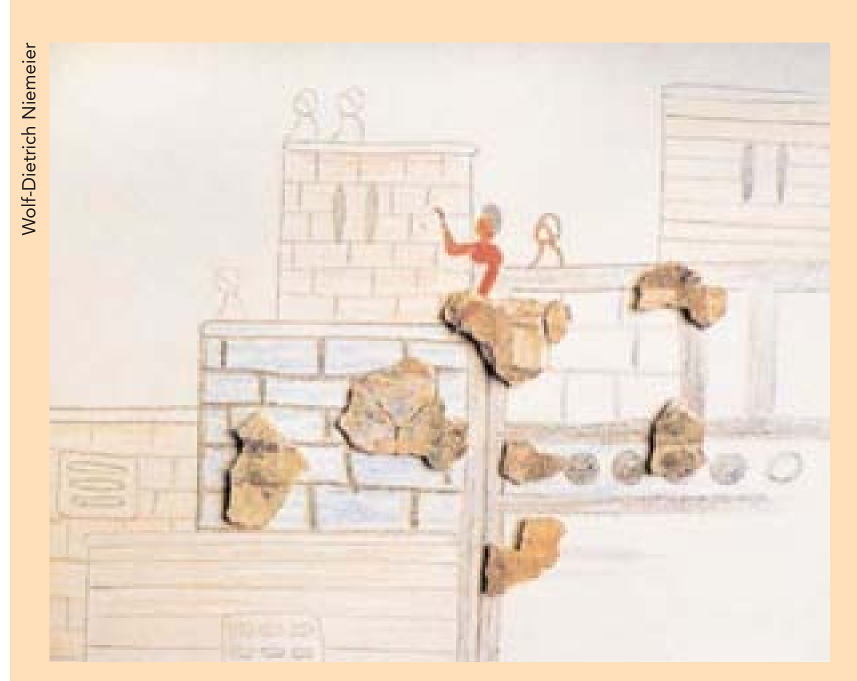
Mythological traditions do not lead us into the same world as archaeology does. The latter is our attempt to win back tangible evidence for the world as it was before us, so that we can reconstruct the look and shape of the past. But the past was inhabited by humans with passions, imagination, fears and prejudices. The avenue to that past, more often than not, passes through mythology.



The Art Archive/Heraklion Museum/Dagli Orti

An undeciphered script, Linear A appears on tablets, pottery and dedicatory vessels at Knossos and other Minoan sites. Clay tablets with this writing have also been recovered in other regions of the Mediterranean, another indication of the Minoans' seafaring ways. Linear A's Mycenaean successor, Linear B, was successfully deciphered in 1952 by British architect Michael Ventris. It is a form of early Greek.

Minoan Frescoes in Egypt, Turkey and Israel



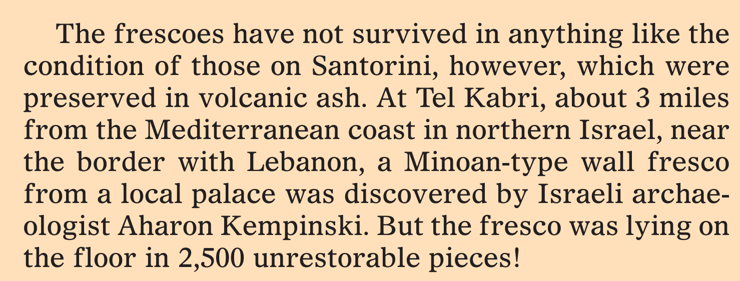
Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier

The most famous Minoan wall painting, dating to about the 17th century B.C., was found on the island of Santorini (ancient Thera), 60 miles north of Crete, where the Minoan culture originated. The magnificent fresco depicts what appears to be a marine festival in a busy Mediterranean harbor. The importance of sea trade and travel is apparent by the number and type of boats in the painting, including three large ships with 42 oars each. By this time, Minoan culture had spread beyond its origins in Crete. But did it spread much further?

In the years since the great discoveries at Thera/Santorini were made by Greek archaeologist Christos Doumas, other archaeologists have found evidence of Minoan culture in Egypt and Turkey—and even in Israel.



Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier

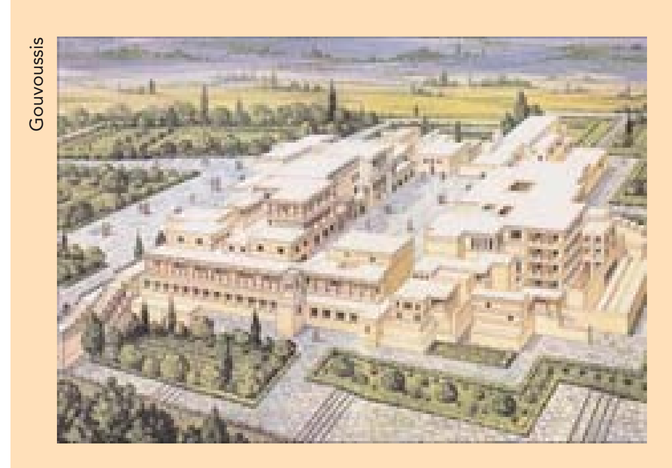


The frescoes have not survived in anything like the condition of those on Santorini, however, which were preserved in volcanic ash. At Tel Kabri, about 3 miles from the Mediterranean coast in northern Israel, near the border with Lebanon, a Minoan-type wall fresco from a local palace was discovered by Israeli archaeologist Aharon Kempinski. But the fresco was lying on the floor in 2,500 unrestorable pieces!

The Minoan frescoes were in almost the same condition at the site of Tell el-Dab‘a, the Hyksos capital of Egypt, and at Alalakh on the plain of Antioch near the Mediterranean coast of Turkey just north of Syria. These frescoes date perhaps a century or so later than the frescoes at Thera/Santorini, evidencing the gradual spread of Minoan culture east into the Levant and south to Egypt.

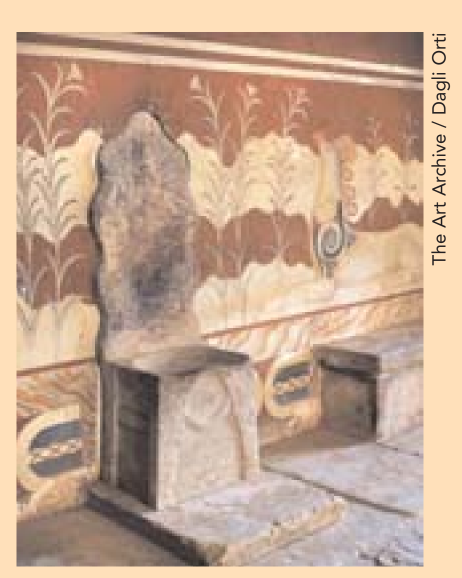
Ancient borders were much more porous than previously thought—at least culturally.

The Palace at Knossos


Gouvoussis

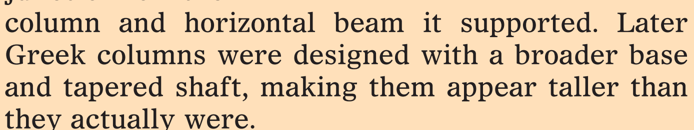
An artist's reconstruction shows the multi-storied palace at Knossos. Pottery from the palace area enabled archaeologists to identify occupation at the site for almost a millennium: a prepalatial period in the late third millennium B.C. and two subsequent palatial periods, the First Palatial period (1900–1700 B.C.) and the Second Palatial period (1700–1450 B.C.).

The building was constructed around a main open court 82 by 180 feet, which functioned as the center of religious, administrative and commercial activity. With approximately 130 rooms, the palace itself was a veritable labyrinth. Built on the slope of a hill, it reached a height of four to five stories in some areas. The palace also featured elaborate sewage and plumbing systems.


The Art Archive / Dagli Orti

The so-called "Throne of Minos" (it is uncertain whether Knossos had kings) sits amid a griffin fresco in the "Throne Room" of the palace. A lustral basin was found in this room, probably used for purification purposes. This basin and the heraldic griffins, sometimes considered symbols of divinity, suggest that the "throne" may have been used by a priest for religious ceremonies.

The columns from the east wing of the palace were originally made of wood. When Evans reconstructed the palace, he restored the columns in cement. Minoan columns like these were made smaller at the bottom and larger at the top to disguise the conjunction of the column and horizontal beam it supported. Later Greek columns were designed with a broader base and tapered shaft, making them appear taller than they actually were.




Erich Lessing

The Minoan thalassocracy (so called because of their control over the seas) left its cities unwalled. The Minoans apparently relied on their navy for the defense of their island domain. Their maritime skills also supported trade and travel to Egypt, Italy, Asia Minor and the Levant.

Sailing the Wine-dark Seas

Crete's great Minoan civilization

By Joan Scheuer

There is a land called Crete . . .
ringed by the wine-dark sea with rolling whitecaps—
handsome country, fertile, thronged with people
well past counting—boasting ninety cities,
language mixing with language side-by-side . . .
Central to all their cities is magnificent Cnossos,
the site where Minos ruled and each ninth year
Conferred with almighty Zeus himself.

(Homer, *Odyssey* 19.195–204)

May 3rd

At JFK we spotted David Reese and his wife, Catherine (Cap) Sease, the scholars who were to lead our trip. My husband, Dick, and I had signed on a *Circumnavigation of Crete* tour sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America. We would sail aboard a small ship, the *Callisto*, stopping at ports around the island. A bus would then take us to sites not accessible by boat.

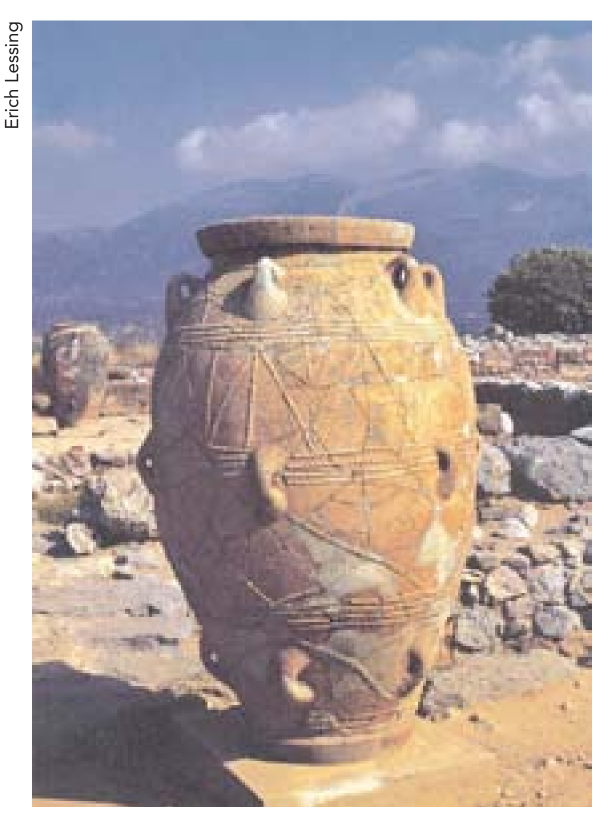
David and Cap have worked together at Kommos, in southern Crete, and separately at many other sites around the Middle East. David is an anthropologist-zoologist who specializes in the analysis of bones and shells; he lectures on the kinds of information to be found in the detritus of human occupation—in the dregs of pots and in human and animal remains. Cap is an archaeological conservator, who would tell us how digs are run and finds preserved.



May 4th

From Athens, we made the short flight to Heraklion, the major city in Crete. A dramatic Venetian fort called Rocca al Mare dominates Heraklion's harbor, where we caught our first view of the *Callisto*. She had been recently renovated, so her brass rails shone brightly and her rich mahogany woodwork glowed with fresh varnish. Our group of 22 assembled in the ship's main salon for welcoming champagne, followed by the obligatory safety drill. Later that night, docking lines were cast off and the *Callisto* set sail east for the port of Aghios Nikolaos.

Erich Lessing



May 5th

A brisk wind blew as we boarded a bus for Mallia, the first site on our itinerary. Our able Greek guide, Stavroula Stratigi, told us that Mallia was the third-largest Minoan palace in

Huge clay pithoi *(storage jars), as tall as a man and decorated with designs mimicking the rope cradles that were used to transport them, once held the oil, grain and other foodstuffs that fed the residents of Mallia, the third largest of the Minoan palaces on Crete. According to legend, Mallia was ruled by Sarpedon, brother of King Minos.*

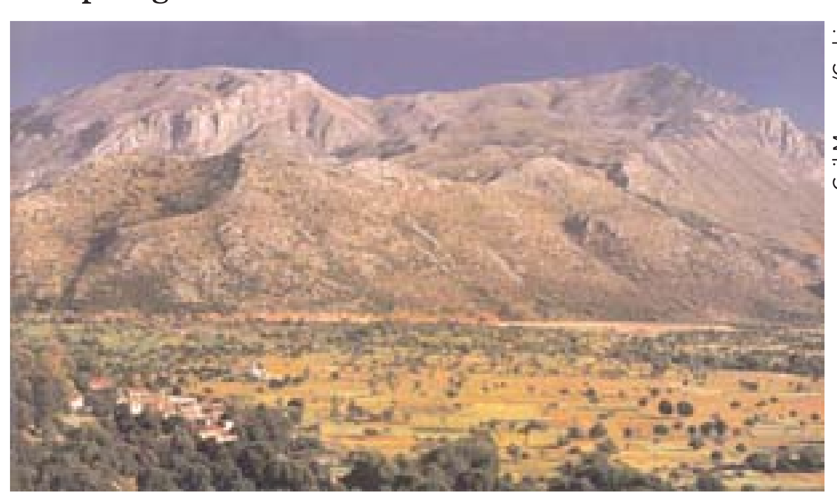
Crete, after those at Knossos and Phaistos. Erected around 1900 B.C., the palace was destroyed several hundred years later in a great catastrophe that leveled so many buildings throughout Crete—putting an end to what archaeologists call the Middle Minoan period (2100–1700 B.C.). Many of the structures—including the palaces at Mallia, Knossos and Phaistos—were then rebuilt on the sites of the old ones. Another catastrophe struck the island around 1450 B.C., again destroying the great Minoan palaces. Some time later (probably toward the end of the 15th century, though the exact date is a subject of controversy) Mycenaeans from the Greek mainland arrived on Crete. The Mycenaeans rebuilt and occupied many of the Minoan palaces.

The Mallia palace was rebuilt after the 1700 B.C. destruction. The royal portion of the palace consisted of many corridors with small rooms. We saw a plaster-lined lustral basin (or bath) and a grand reception hall with multiple doors. In the king's quarters, excavators found a bronze sword and a stone ax shaped like a leopard. These objects are "now on exhibit in the Heraklion Museum"—a phrase we would come across again and again.

The Mallia palace, like most Middle Minoan palaces, had a rectangular central courtyard. In this courtyard sat a round stone table with small hollow depressions running around its outer perimeter. This sacred table, or *kernos*, was probably used for offerings of seeds and fruit—possibly at an altar in the middle of the courtyard. The entrance to another cult area contained masonry blocks incised with the image of the sacred double-ax.

One of the site's most striking objects is a huge, well-preserved storage jar, or pithos, decorated with bold rope designs. More of these pithoi—probably used to contain oil, wine or grain—still stand on one side of the courtyard in a special storage area replete with a drainage system that collected spillage.

That afternoon we drove through the Lasithi plateau, high in the Dhikti mountains (above). The hills were splashed with color from yellow buttercups, red poppies and wild orchids just past their bloom. Stavroula Stratigi told us that the plateau has been inhabited at least since 5000 B.C. Lasithi is criss-crossed by remnants of Roman aqueducts and pockmarked with caves—which have made it an ideal hiding place for rebels and resistance fighters in wars against Venetians, Turks and Germans.



Gail Mooney/Corbis

The high Lasithi plateau (shown here, compare with photo of Phaistos disk), filled with olive groves and vegetable gardens, is surrounded by the 7,000-foot-high Dhikti mountains.

May 6th

On to Lato, a city-state founded in the seventh century B.C. As we scrambled up the rocks to the abandoned site, we were again greeted by flowers—bright poppies, blue gentians, daisies and asters. We came upon a deep cistern overgrown with flowering oregano. Ancient Lato was a carefully planned town; it had well-defined rows of shops and residences, as well as strongly fortified walls, towers and gates, all crowned by an administrative area at the summit of the hill. From this high acropolis, we had a magnificent view of the rolling countryside below.

In the afternoon we visited a Byzantine church, Panaghia Kera. Its primitive frescoes, the earliest dating to the late 13th century A.D., depict the life of Saint Anne, the life of the Virgin, themes from the Gospels and the rewards of Heaven and the perils of Hell.

That evening, as the *Callisto* set sail for Sitia, the wind freshened. During Cap Sease's lecture, the ship rolled so heavily that her projection screen was tossed from one end of the room to the other. It had to be steadied by helping hands—definitely a slide show.



Erich Lessing

A 3-foot-wide kernos *(offering stand) with 34 small hollows around its edge was found in Mallia's courtyard. Like the palaces of Knossos, Phaistos and Kato Zakro, the royal palace of Mallia was reconstructed on a grand scale following a devastating earthquake that struck Crete around 1700 B.C. The rebuilt palace had a rectangular central court abutted by officials' quarters to the west and by the royal family's private quarters to the east.*

May 7th

The bus from Sitia took us to Vai, which offers a lovely sheltered beach in a tropical palm grove. We had a festive lunch—snails and barbecued lamb—and then set out for Kato Zakro.

Dick and I had visited the site years ago, when the Greek archaeologist Nicholas Platon was working there. Kato Zakro lies in a low area of southeastern Crete that is often flooded, making it habitable only part of the year. It is a coastal, sandy place, with small natural pools filled with turtles. No wonder the ancient palace was at first missed by early 20th-century British excavators, who assumed that the major Minoan structures would be situated on the heights.


Erich Lessing

Only 37 miles away from the Lasithi plateau lies Homer's "well-situated Phaistos," where the Phaistos disk (shown here)—a red clay tablet inscribed on both sides with still-undeciphered hieroglyphics—was found.

Kato Zakro was the site of the fourth largest center of Minoan civilization, after Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia. Its palace, like the others, was destroyed around 1450 B.C., though it seems to have escaped the pillaging that occurred at the other sites.

In the palace, we saw a ceremonial bath lined with plaster. We saw workshops where royal purple dye was extracted from murex shells, and a smelting foundry with remnants of the tin and copper used to produce bronze. Passing between two pillars, we came to the central court, where stone pavements still bore traces of red plaster patterns.

In the palace's ceremonial complex, archaeologists found a gold bull's head—which, of course, we were able to see later when we visited the Heraklion Museum. Excavators also found several rhytons (ritual vessels), including a bull's-head vessel fashioned with pierced nostrils so that sacrificial blood or wine could be poured from the creature's mouth.

The palace also contained an archive with tablets inscribed with the so-called Linear A script—which has not yet been deciphered. (When Mycenaeans from the Greek mainland arrived on Crete, they may have adapted Linear A to write their own language, ancient Greek; this script, referred to as Linear B, was deciphered in the 1950s by the English architect and linguist Michael Ventris.) Many of the Minoan Linear A tablets were crushed, but 13 have survived relatively intact.

May 9th

Our ship sailed back to Heraklion. The next morning we boarded a bus to the Mesara Plain—and Phaistos.

"From well-situated Phaistos," writes Homer, "came warriors to join Idomeneus, renowned with the spear, as he gathered the Cretans for the voyage to Troy" (*Iliad* 2.648). Well-situated Phaistos is exhilarating! It commands a broad view of Mount Ida and the river valley below. Sections of the Early Minoan (third millennium B.C.) settlement survive in the Middle Minoan palace's west court and in the processional path leading away from it. An imposing portico with a monumental central column and multiple doors leads into a reception room. Near the east courtyard are storerooms, where clay seals and Linear A tablets were discovered. Here also were pottery workrooms, where artisans probably produced the elegant, thin-walled Kamares ware that we later saw on display in the Heraklion Museum.



Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis

English archaeologist Arthur Evans (compare with photo of scenes of cavorting dolphins).

The famous Phaistos disk was found in the north wing of the palace. Inscribed with a spiral of mysterious symbols, this clay disk has inspired scholars, amateurs and crack-pots to try their hand at decipherment. No one has succeeded.

In the afternoon, we visited Gortyn, a town mentioned by Homer in his account of Menelaus's voyage home from the Trojan War. As Menelaus, the brother of Agamemnon and the husband of Helen, returns to Greece from Troy, a huge storm forces half of his fleet south toward Crete, where "there's a sheer cliff / plunging steep to the surf at the farthest edge of Gortyn, / out on the mist-bound sea" (*Odyssey* 3.331–334).

Gortyn has Hellenistic remains spread out below a high acropolis. Stravroula Stratigi led us to a venerable tree that modern Cretans associate with the legend of Europa, the daughter of the king of Phoenicia. According to the myth, Zeus falls in love with the maiden and then, in the guise of a bull, abducts and rapes her. Europa gives birth to Minos, who later becomes ruler of Crete. Beyond this ancient tree are the remains of a Greek settlement from the fifth century B.C., including traces of an agora, theater and odeon (music hall). On the wall of the odeon is a tightly chiseled Greek inscription—an extensive law code written in boustrophedon (meaning "as the ox ploughs," a script in which a line reading from left to right is followed by a line reading from right to left, and so on). The text, written in a dialect attributed to the Dorian Greeks, consists of detailed rules covering property, marriage, divorce, adoption, mortgages, crime and the rights of slaves. It is said to be the earliest known codification of law in the European world.

We returned through groves of ancient, gnarled olive trees, passing by the ruins of the basilica of Aghios Titos. Now merely a shell, this seventh-century A.D. church was built to house the remains of Crete's first bishop, Saint Titus, who died in 105 A.D.

May 10th

The *Callisto* took us west to Chania, not far from the deep, protected harbor at Souda Bay. Well-preserved Venetian fortifications helped Cretans fend off Turkish invaders for 46 years in the 18th century. During the Second World War, Souda Bay was used to evacuate Allied forces from mainland Greece and to prepare for the Battle of Crete. In 1941, the Cretan resistance, reinforced by British, Australian and New Zealand forces, tried in vain to defend the island against the Nazis.

Chania is the second largest city in Crete. According to legend, it was founded by Cydon, a grandson of King Minos. Thus it was the ancient home of the Cydonians mentioned by Homer. Traces of a Bronze Age settlement have been excavated on the promontory above the harbor.

May 11th

Like Chania, Rethymnon is a fortified port city. It is also a lively university town with many cafés and shops. In the archaeology museum, we saw small sarcophagi called larnakes, decorated with painted images of bulls, birds and humans.

May 12th

On our last full day in Crete we were off to visit the grandest Minoan palace on the island, the royal center of King Minos's regime.

In 1900 the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans began to excavate the site of Knossos. He employed local labor, used newly developed methods of stratigraphy and kept precise records. Evans devoted many years and much of his personal fortune to the work—which was published as the four-volume *The Palace of Minos* (1921–1936). It was Evans who realized that Knossos was the site of one of the earliest-known Bronze Age European cultures—a people he called the Minoans, after the legendary ruler of Crete.

Walking the site in a dull drizzle was somewhat of a letdown. For the first time, we found the crowds of tourists oppressive. This, my second visit to Knossos, lacked the thrill of the first, but I was again struck by



Erich Lessing

The English archaeologist Arthur Evans began excavating the 5-acre site of Knossos in 1900. He uncovered the ruins of a 4-story, 1,000-room palace filled with naturalistic frescoes, some with scenes of cavorting dolphins (shown here, compare with photo of Arthur Evans). Although many scholars believe that Evans's restorations were largely fanciful re-creations of the Minoan works, his team nonetheless discovered abundant evidence of a European Bronze Age civilization at Knossos—including the stone rhyton in the form of a bull's head in the photo above. This libation vessel has eyes made of rock crystal and jasper and horns made of gilded wood.

the scale, elegance and sophistication of the palace. The frescoes that had delighted us years ago were almost impossible to see because they have been cordoned off behind plexiglass barriers. Some of Evans's reconstructions remain, such as the red-painted columns, but in order to distinguish the reconstructions from the original, others have been replaced by white-painted cement. Many people have criticized Evans's restorations as excessively subjective, as unsubstantiated by evidence, but his reconstructions were inspired and have enhanced the experience of thousands of visitors—helping them to perceive the grandeur and beauty that distinguishes this palace from all others in Crete.

Back in Heraklion, we finally reached the museum. This archaeological museum is a must, and it was good to visit it at the end of our trip, rather than at the beginning. We saw treasures from the sites we had visited. The museum reminded us again of the many influences on the people of Crete, lying as it does in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea—influences from Egypt, Anatolia, the Greek mainland, the Levant. We left the museum with a greater and more intimate understanding of Crete's long struggle to retain its identity in this handsome, fertile land thronged with people whose "language mix[es] with language," just as in Homer's day.

All translations from Homer by Robert Fagles' *Odyssey* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1996) and *Iliad* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1991).